



BERNIA

# Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2023/2024

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## Introduction

The #1 objective in Bernicia’s Housing People, Helping People Corporate Strategy is Listening and Delivering Exceptional Services.

This recognises that to deliver exceptional services we must listen to our customers, understand their needs, involve them in not only setting clear standards, but also in monitoring performance against them.

Different people have different needs. We want to understand these differences, and vulnerabilities, to make sure our services are accessible, and that our quality standards and delivery approaches meet the needs of our diverse tenants and neighbourhoods.

Listening to and learning from complaints is a valuable source of insight and intelligence. Analysing complaints data, coupled with feedback from customer satisfaction surveys, compliments, and comments, gives us a robust and rounded view of tenant’s experiences and opinions, which helps direct our focus and resources to set standards, and ensure these are delivered.

We value complaints in helping us to do this, recognising them as a fail safe for tenants, to ensure their concerns and needs are being heard, and that effective responses and resolutions are delivered. Of course, our commitment is always to deliver on the standards and expectations we have set, but if this falls short, we have robust and effective mechanisms for tenants to hold us to account, and ensure their concerns are addressed.

This report gives insight into complaints within our business and our performance around handling and resolving these, as well as what we have learnt, and the improvements we are making. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires social housing landlords to produce an annual self-assessment of compliance with the Code, alongside a complaint performance and service improvement report, which is the primary purpose of this document.

Our self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code can be found at appendix 1 and on our website. The content of this report, and self -assessment were scrutinised and agreed by our Involved Tenants and endorsed by our Customer Services Committee and Group Board.

If you would like further information in relation to this or are interested in getting more involved in our decision-making processes, please contact our engagement team on 0344 800 3800 or [customer.engagement@bernicia.com](mailto:customer.engagement@bernicia.com) who will be happy to help.



## About Bernicia

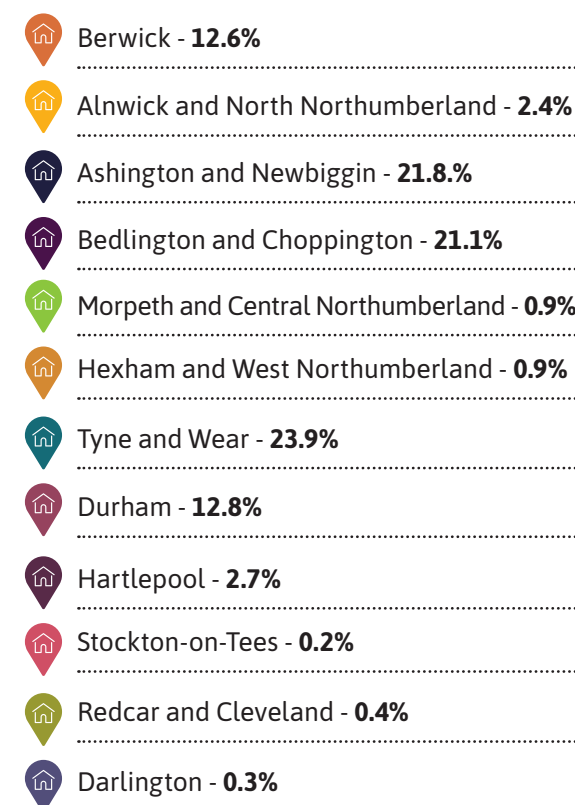
Bernicia owns and manage over 14,000 properties, providing homes and services to circa 30,000 residents across the North East region.

We build, manage, and maintain social housing across a wide range of property types, providing a wide range of services to build and maintain quality homes and estates, promote independence and respect people as individuals.

Our housing portfolio includes 3,000 homes primarily for older people, along with 650 homes for people with specific support needs, including people with physical and learning disabilities, temporary accommodation for households experiencing homelessness and domestic abuse, and people tackling and recovering from substance misuse.

We have the highest governance and financial viability ratings given by the Regulator of Social Housing. We work hard to maintain our financial strength and understand our risks, without being overly constrained or made inert by these, as we recognise that the growing need for quality, affordable accommodation and support services is one of the biggest risks of all.

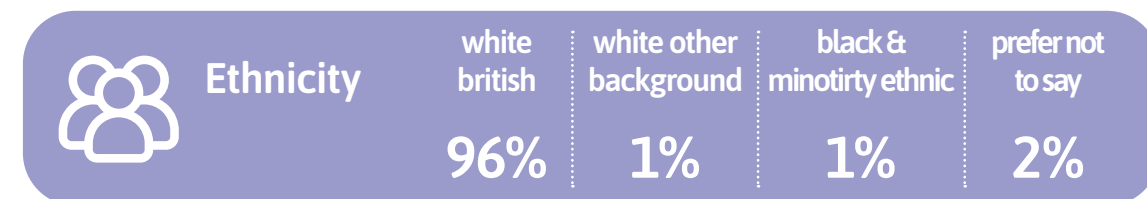
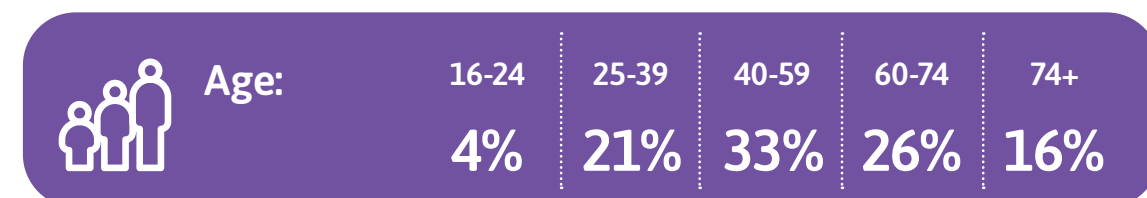
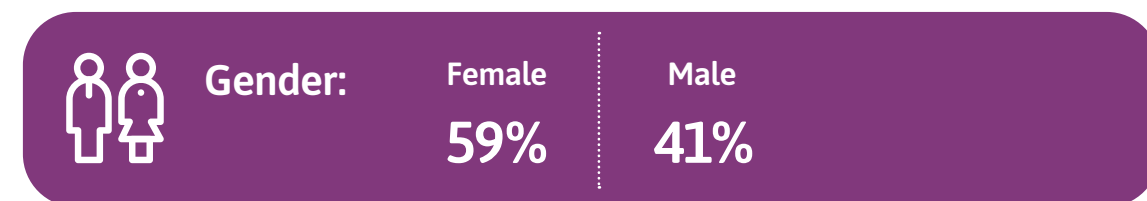
We value our tenants and customer, work together, respect each other, and have the highest levels of accountability and integrity, we deliver what we say we will do, something our tenants, customers and partners can rely upon – that is the Bernicia Way, and for us this is what Bernicia is in business to do.



## Our Tenants

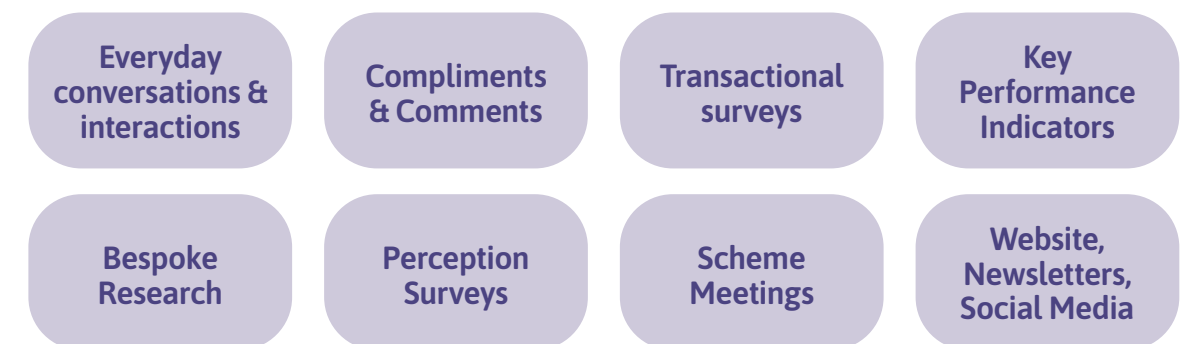
Understanding the profile of our tenants, and in turn their view of the range and standards of the services we deliver helps us identify and design services to meet their diverse needs.

During the year we ran a 'Getting to Know You Campaign' with the aim of increasing our understanding of the specific characteristics of our tenants and their household. This helps us determine whether services are delivered equitably and consistently to all households and localities and helps direct our focus and future actions. We hope to continue to increase this knowledge, so we can continue to refine our services to meet tenant's needs.



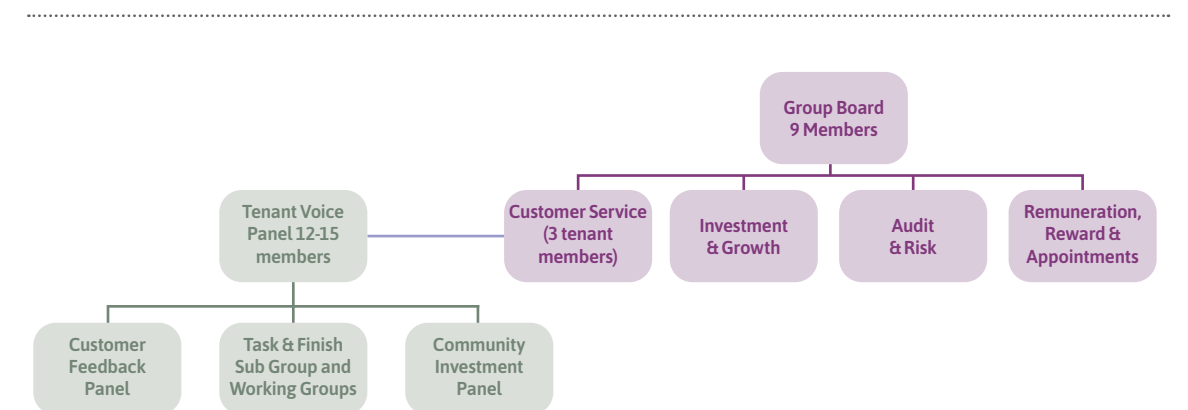
## Listening and Learning

We believe that everyone and every contact counts. Bernicia's Tenant Involvement Strategy commits to engaging with our tenants and offering meaningful opportunities to be involved, to give tenants real influence in how our services are designed and delivered. In addition to the valuable insight gathered from complaints, our insight and intelligence is also drawn from the following:



Feedback is scrutinised by members of our Tenant Voice Panel and committees throughout the year, who translate that insight into actions that inform priority setting, decision making and service design and delivery.

The below demonstrates the formal Involved Tenant's framework and how this integrates to our overall governance structure.



We publish quarterly Key Performance Indicators on our website to ensure the wider body of tenants have relevant information about how we are performing.

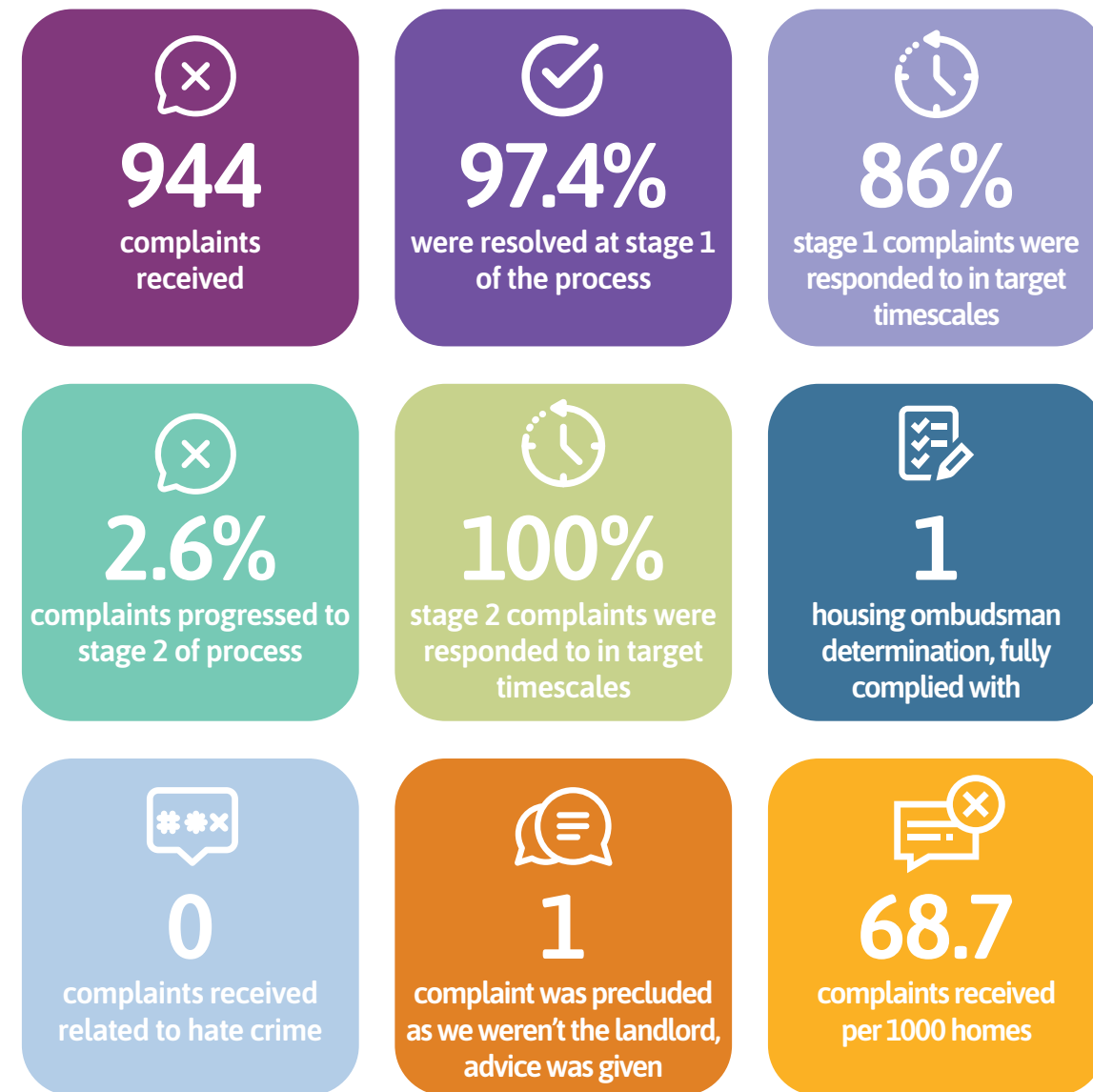
**Bernicia has clear expectations on a tenant first culture that influences service delivery through strong and effective leadership. Staff have a real positive commitment, and this was shown through their behaviors and attitudes to tenants.**

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) review July 2021.



# Complaints Performance

At a glance;

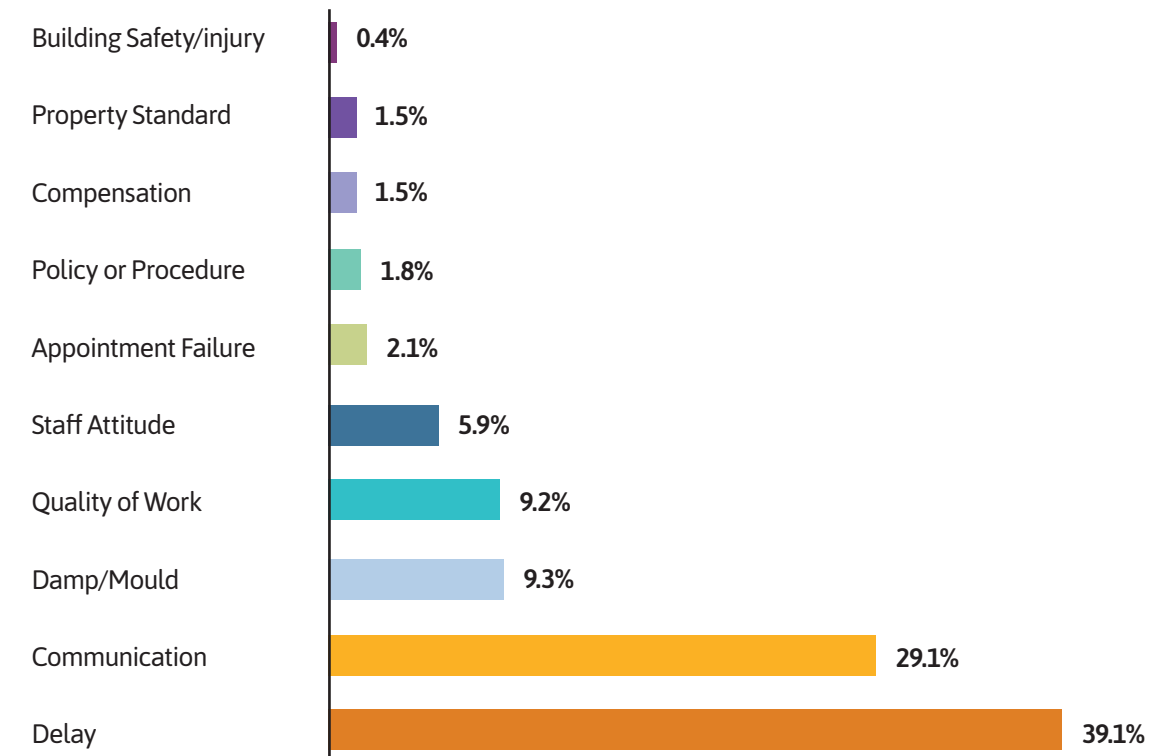


We suspect our volume of complaints may seem high compared to peers. We consider this indicative of a well-publicised, accessible service, and demonstrates our commitment and culture to be transparent and accountable in handling and learning from complaints.

**You can learn more about our complaints service, and how to complain here.**



# Nature of Complaints



**We can clearly see the top 5 reasons for dissatisfaction are.**

- Delays in delivering services.
- Poor communication with tenants
- Damp, mould, and condensation
- Quality of work
- Staff attitude



Delays in delivering services, primarily relates to responsive repairs, and damp, mould and condensation. We have committed £1.1m of additional resources to increase the number of trade operatives we have, to focus on delivering our repairs and maintenance service in a timelier manner.

Poor communication also generated a high volume of complaints. We are investing £4m in a new Customer Relationship Management System, to improve communications, and relationships with tenants and to strengthen colleague collaboration across the business.

During the year we strengthened our complaints handling team with additional resources, trained them on our approach and commitment to customer service excellence, and increased their influence to improve complaints handling and the customer experience.

From a wider cultural perspective, we have established a Customer Service Excellence Board, to improve outcomes and experiences for tenants. Specifically, during the year, we designed and delivered two bespoke e-learning modules informed by feedback from tenants, focussed on the Customer Experience and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

We undertook a comprehensive review of our complaints service, and completely revised our approach, involving tenants in our proposals, to ensure an improved service, and compliance with the new complaint handling code.

In February 2024 we started to survey complainants to learn more about how their complaint was handled. This generated a 43% satisfaction rate. The learning from this will help us identify weakness in our approach, to focus on improvement, and gives us a benchmark to work from.



## Method and Segmentation

The most popular method for reporting complaints remains the telephone, with **74%** of complaints logged through our Customer Service Centre. This is followed by complaints to our website (**15%**) and via email (**9%**). The least popular method is face to face via our frontline colleagues.

Tenants aged 65+ are more likely to express positive views than their younger counterparts, in contrast those aged 16-44 are often more critical.

This age profile analysis comes through when looking at household composition, with family households more likely to be dissatisfied and make a complaint compared to those living in bungalows (this pattern is likely linked to age profile).

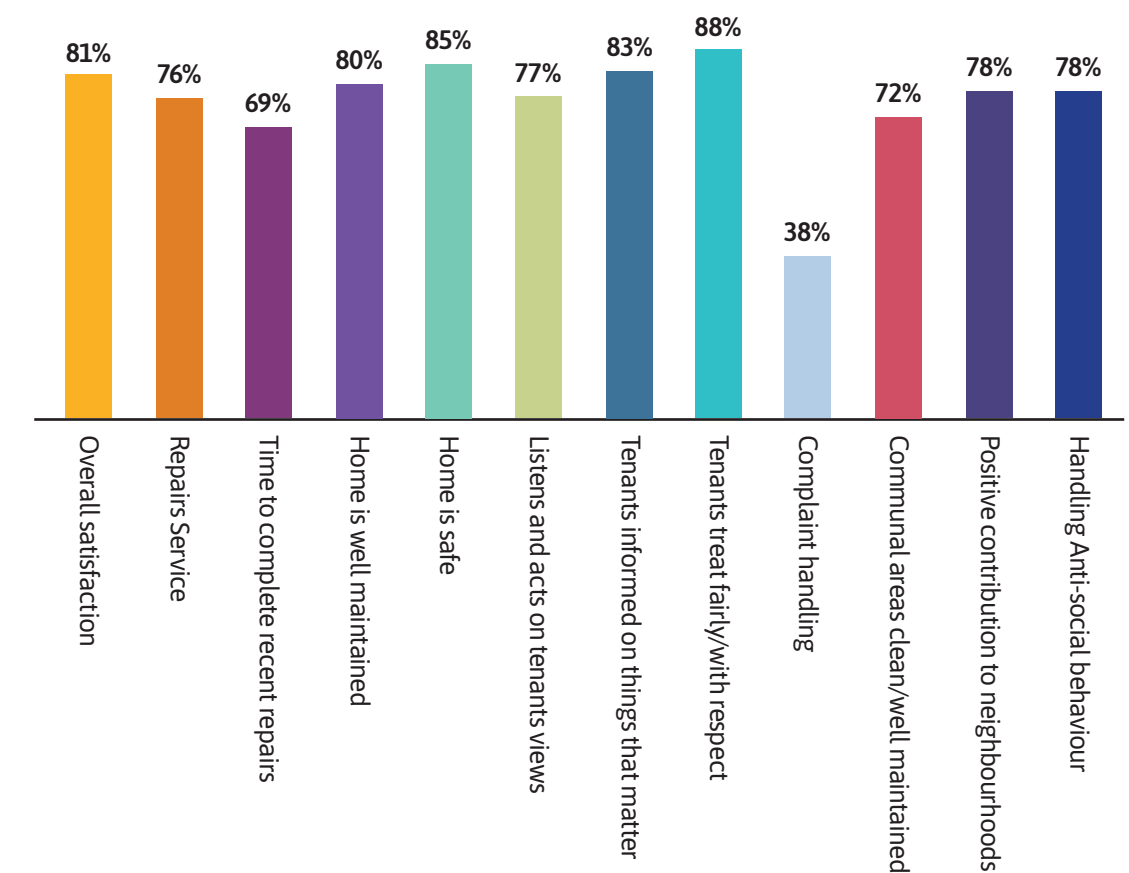
Analysis by local authority area reveals no significant variance between locations which is reassuring given that Bernicia covers 12 local authority areas.

Being dissatisfied with key services such as repairs, or home maintenance has a significant impact on tenant's views of how they feel about Bernicia overall.

Our Getting to Know You campaign is helping us to better understand our diverse tenants and their household, so we can evaluate the level of quality and consistency we deliver to all our tenants and modify our approaches if necessary.

## Tenant Satisfaction

This year we undertook a tenant perception survey, in response to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures set by the regulator of social housing. The results are outlined below;



It is pleasing to see that overall satisfaction with Bernicia as a landlord remains high, along with the confidence tenants have that their home is well maintained and safe to live in. It is also good to learn that our tenants feel they are treated fairly and with respect, and that their views are listened to and acted upon. We are segmenting this data, along with other insight, to progress our Customer Service Excellence commitments.

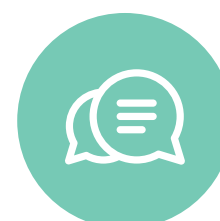


# Operational Context

We are absolutely committed to delivering quality services in a timely manner, it is important therefore to look at complaint's volumes and performance in context;



Compliments are also a valuable source of insight and intelligence to inform our approach, with an ambition for exemplary service becoming the standard we aspire to.





# Service Improvement & Learnings

Trends arising from complaints has directed our focus to 5 priority themes.  
The improvements we have introduced and continue to work on are shown below:

## 1. The timeliness of delivering our repairs service, including responding to damp, mould, and condensation

- An additional £1.1m of resources committed to the recruitment of additional trade operatives to manage increasing demands for repairs, damp mould, and condensation, and returning void properties to a lettable standard.
- Further training for colleagues in diagnostic, triage and initial advice around damp, mould, and condensation to prioritise responses.
- Reviewed the capacity to grow our in-house repairs and maintenance team, giving us more scope and flexibility around increasing and shifting demands in our rural areas. The business case has been agreed and changes will be implemented in 2024/25

## 2. Communications between ourselves and with tenants.

- A significant focus of our improvement work this year has been a £4 million investment in a new Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) - Salesforce. We prioritised the roll-out of the complaints module and tenant query modules to ensure that we have full visibility of all tenant contact into Bernicia and that responses to queries and complaints are tracked and re-reported. Further roll-out of this system will continue over the next two years.
- Following consultation with tenants we changed from a 3 stage to a 2 stage complaints process, to simplify our approach and adhere to the re-vised Complaint Handling Code. We have updated our complaints policy, procedure, leaflet, and website and rolled out mandatory customer excellence & complaint handling/resolution training to colleagues.
- Due to the introduction of the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and increase in complaint levels we have reinforced resources within our complaints team with an additional three new complaint handlers and a data analyst.
- To improve our understanding of the complaint experience for tenants, we have introduced a survey for tenants to complete at the closure of their complaint. This allows us to learn and track how well we are handling complaints in real time.

## 3. Treating people as individuals.

- We have established a Customer Service Excellence Board to strengthen our commitment customer experience. Meetings are chaired by the Executive Director of People, Homes & Communities who drives this agenda and oversees delivery of the customer excellence plan. This is supported by Customer Excellence Champions throughout the business who help shape and implement improvements.
- This year we have been improving and increasing the data we have on tenants, so it can be used in a meaningful way to deliver services, we have named this our 'Getting to know you' campaign and carried this out through postal surveys and telephone calls. Whilst we currently capture some customer data, we want to ensure that we hold up-to-date information, particularly around telephone, email addresses and tenant characteristics to ensure we deliver our services equitably. This work will continue into next year to ensure we can analyze complaints data alongside other key tenant data to provide meaningful insight.
- Following the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Spotlight report on 'Knowledge and Information Management (KIM)', we have undertaken a self-assessment against the 21 recommendations and have developed a strategic plan which encompasses how data is created, stored, used and shared and the culture of Bernicia around this important topic. We recognise that good record keeping assists us in offering efficient, effective services, ensuring decisions and actions are based on good quality insight and information. Clear information needs to be readily available to any member of staff who becomes responsible for a particular matter. Our approach around this will continue into 24/25.

## 4. The ease & simplicity accessing services, and getting things right first time

- Within our contact centre we have worked hard in upskilling colleagues with relevant training and providing coaching and feedback on the quality of our call handling. This was coupled with a review of working patterns and tasks to ensure colleagues are available to answer the calls within our key target of 40 seconds. Our performance here improved in the year from 77% (calls answered in 40 secs) in 22/23, to 83% in the last year.
- We reviewed our approach to handling rent and service charge queries as part of the annual rent process. Upskilling colleagues, enabling better access to detailed information, allowed queries to be handled more effectively, with less communication needed between departments. This improvement was made possible and could be measured due to our new CRM system.
- Recognising that poor communication was a key frustration of tenants we designed and implemented a new process for monitoring and managing tenant queries into Bernicia. This is now handled within our new CRM and allows us to track queries from initial call, through to Housing Officers or specialist teams. We can now better track and report on tenant queries, which in turn allows us to consider improving information on our website and tenant portal

## 5. The quality of wider estate environments and neighbourhoods

- In response to complaints regarding estate services across some schemes, we reviewed the landscaping service with our Involved Tenants and made the decision to internalise elements of the service, enabling increased control, monitoring and flexibility.
- Several of our neighbourhoods also receive services from other agencies. e.g. bin collection, street cleaning, lighting etc. To help tenants understand who provides which services, we have introduced annual individual Benefits Statement for each household. This details the services they have received from us during the year, and what services they are due. It also highlights if there are any house improvement works programmed for their home. It includes details about their rent and service charges, and what their service charges are for. The statement details our performance against key targets and how tenants influence decision making. It includes the profile information we have for the household and asks tenants to update us if anything has changed, to help us design services around tenants needs.



# Key Focus 2024 - 2025

Priorities for the year ahead reflect the learning from complaints this year and continue to strengthen the processes, practices and recording systems, which support us to learn and improve from complaints; ultimately ensuring customers receive the best services possible.

Our Complaint Service Improvement Plan 24/25 will give an opportunity for tenants and colleagues to shape and influence improvements to our Complaints approach and we look forward to working together in the forthcoming year.

This plan will be governed through our Tenant Engagement framework and by our Customer Excellence Board which has representatives from key functions across Bernicia working together with the single aim of improving our customer focus.

**This year we will:**



Improve our repairs customer experience through design and implementation of our repair's module within Salesforce.



Enhance our complaints performance dashboard and share this widely through our communication channels.



Review, design and deliver our Customer excellence and complaints training to colleagues.



Strengthen our complaints analysis and segmentation, including our approach to vulnerability.



Review how we deliver our quick response to Damp, Mould & Condensation with additional resources.



Ensure the right people with the right skills are in place to deliver the quality and range of services we've committed to.



Review our approach to noise complaints learning from the Ombudsman guidance on this topic.



If you would like to be more involved in influencing the design and delivery of services, and contributing to our decision making processes, please contact our engagement team on 0344 800 3800 or [customer.engagement@bernicia.com](mailto:customer.engagement@bernicia.com) who will be happy to help.





## Appendix 1 – Self Assessment

## Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2 A complaint must be 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.’	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li><li>• Complaints and Compliments procedure</li><li>• Complaints leaflet</li></ul>	Communicated to colleague via mandatory read and published on complaints and Compliments section on website.
1.3 A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li></ul>	<p>Section 2 policy statements refer to encouraging positive and negative feedback.</p> <p>Section 2.4 refers to acceptance and handling of complaints from third party or representative</p>
1.4 Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li></ul>	There is a clear demarcation between a service request where the recipient is seeking a remedy and making a complaint about a service failure. This is recorded and report-ed within the Salesforce system.
1.5 A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li></ul>	<p>Our Insight team review feedback comments within surveys and manage this process.</p> <p>Perception surveys, conducted by a third party, customers are offered the option of contact with Bernicia to pursue any issues, by requesting a follow up.</p>
1.6 An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li></ul>	<p>Our Insight team review feedback comments within surveys and manage this process.</p> <p>Perception surveys, conducted by a third party, customers are offered the option of contact with Bernicia to pursue any issues, by requesting a follow up.</p>

## Section 2: Exclusions

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1 Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint, they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaint and Compliments policy</li><li>• Communication templates</li></ul>	<p>If we are unable to accept a complaint, a written response is provided to the customer with reason why and Ombudsman details included in the response.</p> <p>Salesforce system contains standard communication templates</p>
2.2 A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:  The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.  Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.  Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li><li>• Complaints and compliments procedure</li></ul>	<p>Complaint and Compliments policy Section 2.11 refers to time period for complaints over 12 months.</p> <p>Complaints and Compliments policy scope section refers to exclusions for certain aspects of dissatisfaction, which all have alternate resolution and escalation routes to address such matters and any matters which have previously been considered.</p>
2.3 Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy and procedure</li></ul>	Complaints will be assessed on an individual basis and discretion applied for complaints out-side of the 12 months.



## Section 2: Exclusions

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.4 If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	<p>Policy scope section refers to exclusions for certain aspects of dissatisfaction, which all have alternate resolution and escalation routes to address such matters.</p> <p>If we are unable to accept a complaint, a written response is provided to the customer with Ombudsman details included in the response.</p> <p>Complaint management system (Salesforce) - letter templates</p>
2.5 Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments procedure</li> </ul>	Section 2.12 of policy details individual complaint circumstances.

## Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1 Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Complaints leaflet</li> </ul>	<p>Section 2 of policy details we will make multiple accessible routes for customers. This is promoted in Complaints leaflet and website which include: in person, tele-phone, website, social, MyBernicia, in writing (Letter or email).</p> <p>Translation and interpretation services are available with web-site being enabled with accessi-bility software (Recite)</p>
3.2 Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li> <li>• Training records (CRM - Salesforce)</li> </ul>	<p>Our Complaints Policy is a mandatory read for colleagues and this is monitored.</p> <p>Complaints system training to raise a complaint in accordance with process.</p>
3.3 High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Customer Excellence training</li> </ul>	<p>We promote our Complaints and Compliments policy and process along with the Housing Ombudsman Service and Complaint Handling Code on our website and in our Tenants Annual Review.</p> <p>We also display complaints leaflet within communal areas of Bernicia Living schemes and office reception areas.</p> <p>All colleagues have received Customer Excellence training which covers the culture and accountability of complaint handling.</p>
3.4 Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments policy and procedure</li> <li>• Website – Complaints and Compliments section</li> <li>• Complaints leaflet</li> </ul>	<p>The policy is available online and / or in print on request.</p> <p>Complaints leaflet to explain the policy in simpler terms is also available online and in hardcopy.</p> <p>All definitions, the stages and how they work, how customers transition between stages and all timeframes are included.</p>

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.5 The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li><li>• Website – Complaints and Compliments section</li></ul>	<p>Section 2.13 Policy.</p> <p>Website has a section for Self-Assessment and Code with Ombudsman details</p> <p>Translation and interpretation services are available with web-site being enabled with accessi-bility software (Recite)</p>
3.6 Landlords must give residents the op-portunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li></ul>	<p>Policy – section 2.4 refers to acceptance and handling of complaints from third party or representative.</p>
3.7 Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li><li>• Complaint leaflet</li><li>• Website – complaints and compliments section</li><li>• Communication templates</li></ul>	<p>Information about the ombudsman service is included within the policy and reference to the Ombudsman service within dedicated section on Website, also reference is made to the Ombudsman service at appropriate response stages within the complaint process.</p>

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1 Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the ‘complaints officer’. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy &amp; Procedure</li><li>• Complaints procedure Flowchart</li><li>• Role profiles</li></ul>	<p>We have a dedicated Complaints team who handle and manage all complaints which included complaint handler and complaints officer. We also have a Customer Relationship Manager who oversees complaints and provides support to the Team. Complaint handlers are assigned according to the nature and stage of the complaint.</p> <p>We present a detailed quarterly report to our Customer Services Committee, the Chair of which is a Group Board Member.</p> <p>The Customer Services Committee includes 3 tenant members.</p> <p>This information is also provided to the Customer Feedback Panel, who scrutinise, challenge and discuss insight and make recommendations from learnings to drive improvement.</p>
4.2 The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and compliments Procedure and flowchart</li></ul>	<p>Our Complaint Team have access to designated colleagues within service areas, they have access to quick resolution and are empowered to exercise autonomy and authority.</p>
4.3 Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training records</li><li>• Bernicia Way Values and behaviours</li></ul>	<p>Complaint handlers along with all frontline colleagues have received Customer Service Excellence training. The Bernicia Way details values and behaviours and is available through our learning management system.</p> <p>Bernicia Way, values and behaviours promote a customer centric culture</p>

## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1 Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments policy	Policy applies to all complaints and complainants.
5.2 The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy • Complaints and Compliments Procedure	<p>We always seek to understand the outcome a customer is looking for and work with the customer to find a mutually agreeable solution.</p> <p>At stage 1 we ask the customers desired outcome to agree appropriate actions for resolution.</p> <p>At stage 2 our procedure formally includes a question seeking the customers desired outcome and seeks to broker a discussion prior to investigation.</p> <p>Our systems are designed to capture this information and guide colleagues through the timelines.</p> <p>We do not have a pre complaint stage.</p>
5.3 A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy • Complaints and Compliments Procedure	We currently only have two formal complaint stages – stage 1 and stage 2.
5.4 Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g., a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy	The Complaint Team co-ordinate a response to a customer and would liaise with any third party to provide a response in accordance with our complaints process.
5.5 Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	• See above	• See above

## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.6 When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy • Complaints and Compliments Procedure • Communication templates	<p>A summary is provided within the acknowledgement template. We also ask the complainant to explain their reason for escalating their complaint using questions.</p> <p>If this is not clear, contact will be made to establish and clarify this information.</p>
5.7 When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy • Complaints and Compliments Procedure • Communication templates	If an element of the complaint is not to be progressed or accepted in its entirety in both instances, reference will be made to the reasons why or the exclusions highlighted within the Complaints and Compliments Policy and procedure, this will be confirmed in communication to complainant along with their right to approach the Housing Ombudsman. Contact details for the Ombudsman are provided in complaint outcome responses.
5.8 At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes	• Complaint and Compliments procedure	<p>Our Complaint and Compliments procedure (section 4) outlines the various roles of colleagues who are involved in complaint handling.</p> <p>Colleagues have received training depending upon their role.</p>
5.9 Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy • Complaints and Compliments Procedure	<p>Within our Complaints and Compliments policy, procedure and customer leaflet we express our aim to respond within the timescales stated.</p> <p>If we need more time, we will agree this with the customer and confirm the extension in writing. We use a complainant's preferred method of communication during the investigation of their complaint.</p> <p>We share when and how we will communicate with them and, when asked, we will adapt.</p>



## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>5.10</b> Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equality, diversity &amp; Inclusion policy</li><li>• Training records</li><li>• Person account</li></ul>	<p>Our Complaints and Compliments policy and procedure has a dedicated section on Equality and Diversity.</p> <p>We have a published Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which covers all relevant aspects to ensure we consider and provide accessible and inclusive services which meet diverse needs. These documents are referenced in our policy.</p> <p>All colleagues receive Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion training as core e-learning at induction and refresher training.</p>
<b>5.11</b> Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li><li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li></ul>	<p>We ask customers to answer questions as part of their request to escalate to stage 2. If they do not answer the questions, we will contact the customer to establish this. If we were to refuse to escalate, we would explain in writing, including guidance on next steps. We also articulate in our policy where we would not accept a complaint such as matter being dealt with through legal action.</p>
<b>5.12</b> A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CRM system (Salesforce)– Case records</li><li>• MRI Document management system</li></ul>	<p>All notes and contacts in relation to the investigation of the complaint will be held in our complaints management system (Salesforce), supported by integrated document management system (MRI).</p>

## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>5.13</b> Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li><li>• Complaints and Compliments procedure</li></ul>	<p>We endeavour to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Colleagues are empowered to take ownership and have the authority to provide resolutions.</p>
<b>5.14</b> Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaint and Compliments Policy</li><li>• Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy</li></ul>	<p>Complaints policy – section 2.19 refers to how we will manage a complainant or complaint that fall within the remit of unacceptable behaviour in accordance with;</p> <p>Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy in place.</p>
<b>5.15</b> Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaint and Compliments Policy</li><li>• Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy</li></ul>	<p>Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy has an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure consideration is given to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.</p> <p>Before restricting a customer's contact, consideration will be given to ensure the sanctions are proportionate considering the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.</p>

## Section 6: Complaints Stages

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>6.1</b> Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments policy</li> <li>• Performance information</li> </ul>	Our policy statements refer to resolving issues and putting things right as quickly as possible.
<b>6.2</b> Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure <b>within five working days of the complaint being received</b> .	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints &amp; Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Performance monitoring KPI's</li> </ul>	<p>Our policy and procedure aim to acknowledge stage one no longer than 5 working days.</p> <p>We monitor our performance in this area on a monthly basis and as part of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures.</p>
<b>6.3</b> Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <b>within 10 working days</b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints &amp; Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Performance monitoring KPI's</li> </ul>	<p>Policy, procedure and customer leaflet we express our aim to respond within the timescales stated.</p> <p>We monitor our performance in this area on a monthly basis and as part of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures.</p>
<b>6.4</b> Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for re-sponse. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints &amp; Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	If an extension is required, we will explain the reason(s) why we need more time, we will agree this with the customer and confirm the extension in writing.
<b>6.5</b> When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Customer leaflet</li> <li>• Communications template</li> </ul>	Details of the Ombudsman are detailed on extension template

## Section 6: Complaints Stages

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>6.6</b> A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Out-standing actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	Within our Complaints and Compliments policy and procedure, updates and substantive responses will be provided as soon as the result is known. Contact will be maintained with the customer until all outstanding actions are tracked and complete.
<b>6.7</b> Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Response templates prompt and provide guidance to ensure all points raised are responded to and the rationale for all decisions are presented.
<b>6.8</b> Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 re-sponse has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	Section 5.7 within complaints procedure refers to this point.
<b>6.9</b> Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the complaint stage;</li> <li>b. the complaint definition;</li> <li>c. the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Letter templates provide all of these details and our policy and procedure guide complaint handlers on what is expected of them.

## Stage 2

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>6.10</b> If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Compliment and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	<p>Our policy details if the customer remains dissatisfied with all or part of the Stage 1 re-sponse, they can escalate to Stage 2.</p> <p>We operate a 2-stage process and our response at this stage will be final.</p>
<b>6.11</b> Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> <li>• Performance Information</li> </ul>	<p>Our Complaints and Compliments policy and procedure explains this, including the transition between each stage and exclusions.</p> <p>If a customer requests escalation this is carried out in accordance with the procedure and timescales</p>
<b>6.12</b> Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	Section 5.9 of the procedure details we would try to establish this to reach a satisfactory resolution.
<b>6.13</b> The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> </ul>	Both Policy and procedure confirms the person considering the complaint at Stage 2, will not have been involved in the complaint consideration at Stage 1.
<b>6.14</b> Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <b>within 20 working days</b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Performance monitoring</li> </ul>	<p>Our Complaints and Compliments policy, procedure and customer leaflet advise we will respond in 20 working days.</p> <p>Performance in this area is monitored and reported monthly and through TSM's.</p>
<b>6.15</b> Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	We also explain how if we need more time, we will agree this with the customer and confirm this in writing.

## Stage 2

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>6.16</b> When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Our extension templates include the Housing Ombudsman contact details.
<b>6.17</b> A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	Within our policy and procedure, updates and substantive responses will be provided as soon as the result is known. Contact will be maintained with the customer until all outstanding actions are complete.
<b>6.18</b> Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Response templates prompt and provide guidance to ensure all points raised are re-sponded to and the rationale for all decisions are presented.
<b>6.19</b> Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the complaint stage;</li> <li>b. the complaint definition;</li> <li>c. the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Letter templates provide all of these details and our policy and procedure guide complaint handlers on what is expected of them.
<b>6.20</b> Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> <li>• Communication templates</li> </ul>	Response at Stage 2 clearly states this is our final response and will involve all relevant staff to provide this.



## Section 7: Putting things right

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<p><b>7.1</b> Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologising;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> <li>• Changing policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Procedure</li> </ul>	Complaints procedure section 5.7 covers this.
<p><b>7.2</b> Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.</p>	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Procedure	This will be considered at Stage 1 and Stage 2 response as appropriate
<p><b>7.3</b> The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.</p>	Yes	• Communication templates	Response will include a plan of action to enable these to be proactively managed to completion.
<p><b>7.4</b> Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.</p>	Yes	• Complaints and Compliments Policy	Guidance will be considered along with the individual need of the complainant and details of the complaint to provide appropriate remedies to the issue(s) being experienced.

## Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<p><b>8.1</b> Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.</li> <li>b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;</li> <li>c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</li> <li>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</li> <li>e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</li> <li>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ombudsman Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code</li> <li>b) Performance information – Qualitative &amp; quantitative</li> <li>c) Determinations from Ombudsman where appropriate</li> <li>d) Service improvements from learnings</li> <li>e) Annual Report from Housing Ombudsman – if 5 or more determinations for 2023/24</li> <li>f) Any reports / publications from Ombudsman about Bernicia as appropriate</li> </ul>	We will comply with regulatory guidance within the required timeframes. This will be published and shared widely with customers.
<p><b>8.2</b> The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.</p>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ombudsman Self-Assessment</li> <li>• Website – Complaints and Compliment section</li> <li>• Annual Complaints performance</li> <li>• Service improvement report</li> </ul>	The Ombudsman Self-assessment will be published to website within the Complaints and Compliments – Self Assessment section. Along with the Annual complaints performance and service improvement
<p><b>8.3</b> Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.</p>	Yes	• Complaints policy	June 2023 a change in policy and procedure triggered a self-assessment out with the annual cycle.
<p><b>8.4</b> Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.</p>	Yes	• Complaints policy	We will review as per guidance
<p><b>8.5</b> If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website. Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.</p>	Yes	• Business Continuity Plans	We will comply with the code unless exceptional circumstances prevent us from doing so, where business continuity plans will be put into operation for a return to business as usual, as soon as possible.

## Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>9.1</b> Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Feedback report</li> </ul>	We use complaints to identify themes and trends to provide a broader picture for service improvement learning and opportunities
<b>9.2</b> A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Policy</li> <li>• Feedback Report</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints and Compliments policy – section 2 policy statements refer to encouraging positive and negative feedback.</p> <p>We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve services for the wider customer base. We use complaints to identify themes and issues to create improvement opportunities within service delivery.</p>
<b>9.3</b> Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants Annual Review</li> <li>• CSC Feedback report</li> <li>• Customer Feedback panel report</li> </ul>	<p>We publish learnings on our website and intranet in our Tenants Annual Review.</p> <p>A quarterly report is provided to Customer Services Committee and Customer Feedback Panel.</p>
<b>9.4</b> Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer engagement and Business Intelligence – organisational chart</li> <li>• Role Profiles</li> </ul>	The complaints team sits within the Customer Engagement and Business Intelligence function with a Head of Service, with a Customer Relationship Manager who directly manages the complaint team, along with Insight manager to analyse customer insight and from complaints
<b>9.5</b> In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernicia Group Board Minutes – appointing, Member Responsible for Complaints (19 March – Agenda item 9)</li> </ul>	MRC appointed at Bernicia Group Board

## Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<b>9.6</b> The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See below</li> </ul>	<p>MRS has access to staff at Executive and Director level, and Operational level.</p> <p>See below re: information</p>
<b>9.7</b> As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;</li> <li>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;</li> <li>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</li> <li>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual complaints performance and service improvement report – scheduled early June 2024</li> </ul>	<p>Performance on case handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistical data on complaints</li> <li>• Details of all cases investigated by the Ombudsman.</li> <li>• Complaint learning activity and findings.</li> <li>• Audit or risk activity relating to the complaints service.</li> <li>• An update on initiatives and progress</li> <li>• Annual Self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code</li> <li>• Service Improvement report will be shared.</li> </ul>
<b>9.8</b> Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. have a collaborative and cooperative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</li> <li>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</li> <li>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</li> </ul>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernicia way – Values and Behaviours</li> <li>• Customer Service Excellence Training</li> </ul>	<p>Our vision, values and behaviours are well communicated to colleagues and embedded in our culture through effective leadership. Our behaviours include those specific to how we interact with our customers.</p> <p>Customer Service Excellence training further supports colleagues' complaint handling and their role to work collaboratively across teams and departments, taking ownership and responsibility and delivering this in a professional way as set out in the CIH's Professional Standards.</p>



# How to contact us

**Online:** [www.bernicia.com](http://www.bernicia.com)

**Email:** [contact@bernicia.com](mailto:contact@bernicia.com)

**Phone:** 0344 800 3800

**Letter:** Bernicia Group, Oakwood Way, Ashwood Business Park, Ashington NE63 0XF



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# BERNICIA