

Richmond Fellowship (RF) 2023- 2024 year end complaints report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of Richmond Fellowship performance on complaints in 2023 -24 and comparison to the previous two years.
- 1.2 Since 2021-22 we have seen a steady reduction in a number of complaints made each year. In 2023-24, 77 complaints were recorded as formal at Stage 1. It is worth noting that on a small number of occasions this process was also used to record informal complaints. A piece of work is needed to ensure that the process for recording informal (service request) and formal complaints are used correctly.
- 1.3 Review of the complaint incident records often demonstrated that complaints were responded to promptly. However, overall inadequate use of organisational systems for logging complaints investigations meant that there is a limited assurance for organisation in terms of complaints management practice following organisational policy and procedure. Improving practice in terms of documenting each stage of a formal complaint investigation and ensuring that there is a clear audit trail remains an area for improvement.
- 1.4 Following Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code becoming a statutory requirement, the Quality and Compliance team will be reviewing organisational complaint policy and procedures and systems to ensure that RF is compliant with its requirements.

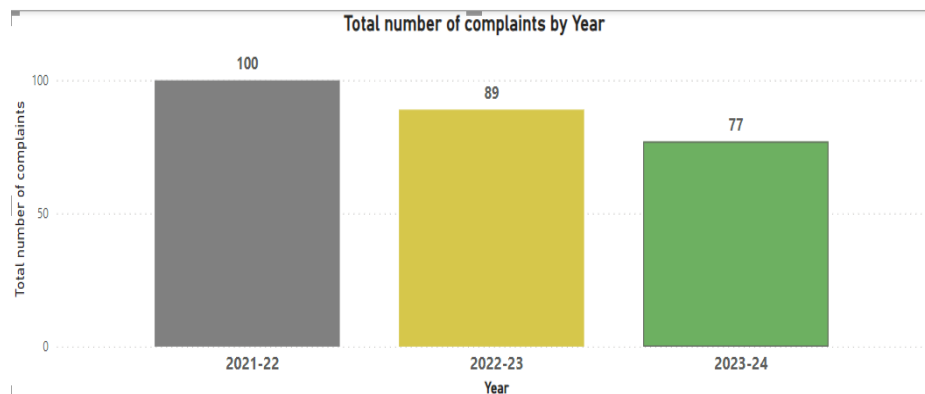
2. Background

- 2.1 Richmond Fellowship has a two-stage complaint process with a target response of ten working days at each stage.
- 2.2 In the current complaint process, the complainant can choose for his complaint to be treated as informal. This is equivalent to a service request as defined in the Complaints Handling Code (see below) and the naming will be updated to ensure compliance with the code.
- 2.3 On 1st of April 2024 Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code¹ became a statutory requirement meaning that all landlords are obliged by law to comply with its requirements. We have completed a self-assessment against the code and will be working on implementing changes across a small number of areas where RF do not yet fully meet the code requirements. This work will be carried out in a context of the upcoming merger with Humankind. It would require a completion of the complaint self-assessment to ensure that the merged organisation is complaint with the Housing Ombudsman complaint code.

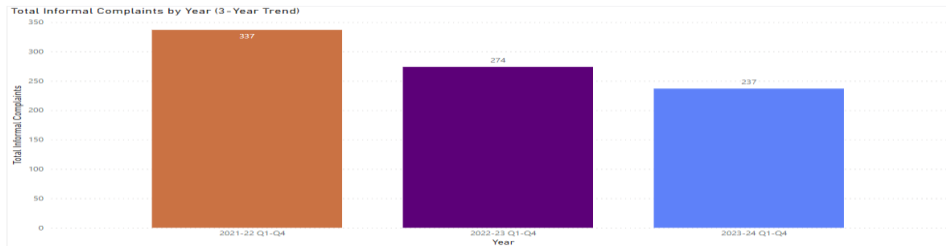
¹ [Complaint Handling Code 2024 | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/complaint-handling-code-2024)

3. Performance Analysis 2023 – 2024

- 3.1 This section of the report provides information on complaint volumes, the status of the complainant, the nature and the outcome of complaints and complaints responded to on time.
- 3.2 Each formal complaint must be recorded in RF Connect. The complaint incident form has an attached tracker for logging information about the complainant, nature of the complaint, management, and the outcome of the complaint investigation. As illustrated in the tables below, some sections of the trackers were incomplete (please see “blank” column). For example, in 2023-24 just over 50% of complaints had an outcome recorded. Due to the volume of the missing data, analysis on the complaints performance in this section needs to be treated with caution. Reviewing incident reports, there was often evidence that complaints have been followed up and investigated. However, this lack of audit trail gives limited assurance in terms of robustness of organisational practice in terms of complaint management. The Quality and Compliance team regularly monitors completion of the trackers and where necessary, would contact relevant manager about updating information. However, fully logging management of complaints investigations remains an area for improvement and one that the team will continue to work on with managers across the organisation.
- 3.3 The Quality and Compliance team were planning an in-depth review of the complaints logging process in 2023-24. The review has been postponed and due to take place after an impending merger with Humankind.
- 3.4 There were 77 formal complaints recorded at Stage 1 in 2023-24. This is 23% and 12.3% less than in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively.



- 3.5 During the same period there has also been almost 30% decrease in the number of informal complaints made as illustrated below. The logging system for recording management of informal complaints will be reviewed as in its present form it does not allow for tracking the management of informal complaints from being made to being resolved/escalated.



3.6 This reduction in the number of both formal and informal complaints occurred in the context of a year-on-year increase in the number of people accessing Richmond Fellowship services (11% between 2021-22 and 2023-24). We would expect at least a comparable increase in a number of complaints made. Possible explanation for this opposite trend might be an increased satisfaction with RF staff, support and premises by people who use our services. In the 2023-24 satisfaction survey 98% of people said that they were satisfied with the quality of support and staff from (90% in 2022-23). Premises were considered suitable and clean by 97% of people, an increase of 23% compared to a year earlier. We have also seen a 9% increase (80%) in people agreeing that repairs and maintenance were timely and effective. Encouragingly, 91% knew how to make a complaint, 12% more than in 2022-23.

3.7 Currently there is no central system to capture complaints that have been refused. This is a gap in the system that has been identified during the self-assessment and work will be carried out to address it.

4. Complainant status

4.1 As shown in the table below over half (52%) of all the complaints received in 2023-24 were from people using RF services which was a slight increase on a previous year. Number of complaints received from family and friends increased by more than half compared to 2022-23. Complaints from neighbours decreased by more than a third during the same period.

Year	Blank	Neighbour	Other	Person using our service	Person using our Service/ Family/Friend	Person who used to use our service	Total
2021-22	6	15	5	57	13	4	100
2022-23	22	14	6	38	4	5	89
2023-24	13	4	8	41	10	1	77
Total	41	33	19	136	27	10	266

5. Nature of complaints

5.1 Compared to two previous years there was a reduction across the majority of the complaint types in 2023-24. The main nature of complaints received related to Richmond Fellowship staff. With exception of one, all of these complaints were upheld/partially upheld. The second most frequent complaint was about a person

using the service behaviour and Richmond Fellowship service. The complaints about the RF service were the only category that has seen an increase compared to the numbers received in the last two years. A complaint outcome was recorded for 57% of these complaints. Of those 50% was partially upheld, and half was not substantiated.

Year	Blank	Other	Person we support's behaviour	RF Noise	RF Property	RF Service	RF Staff	Total
2021-22	9	9	36	2	5	9	30	100
2022-23	22	7	22		5	9	24	89
2023-24	15	5	15	1	3	15	23	77
Total	46	21	73	3	13	33	77	266

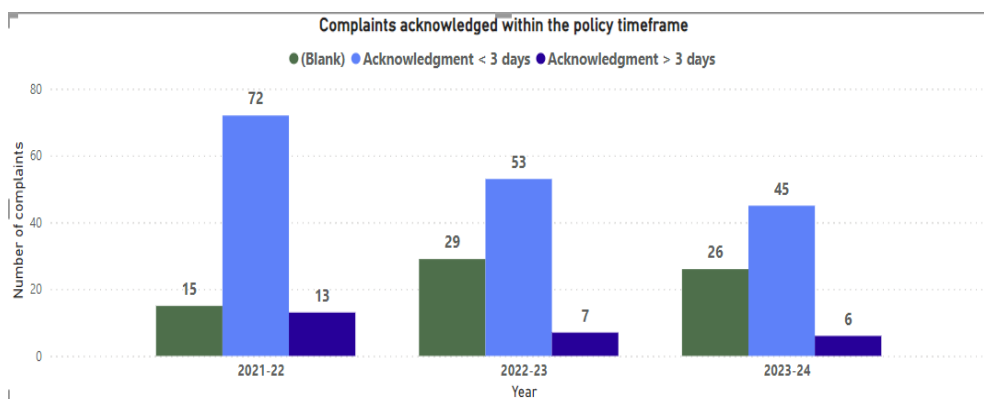
6. Complaint outcome

6.1 As shown in the table below, of 51.9% of complaints that had an outcome recorded in 2023-24, 72.5% was upheld or partially upheld. Due to missing data each year it would be difficult to compare whether this is consistent with previous years and hence no comparisons were drawn here.

Year	Blank	Not Substantiated	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
2021-22	31	21	15	33	100
2022-23	42	17	14	16	89
2023-24	37	11	18	11	77
Total	110	49	47	60	266

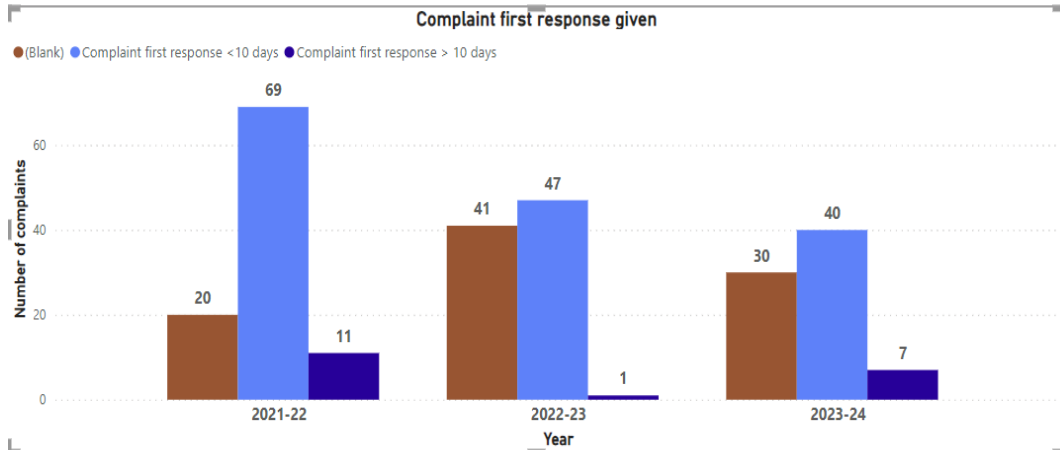
7. Timeliness

7.1 In just over a third of complaints made in 2023-24, there was no confirmation that the complaint has been acknowledged. Where information was available, in most cases complainants received a timely acknowledgement in line with the organisational policy. In a small number of cases, complaints were acknowledged more than three working days after the complaint was logged and in one case this has taken nearly two months.

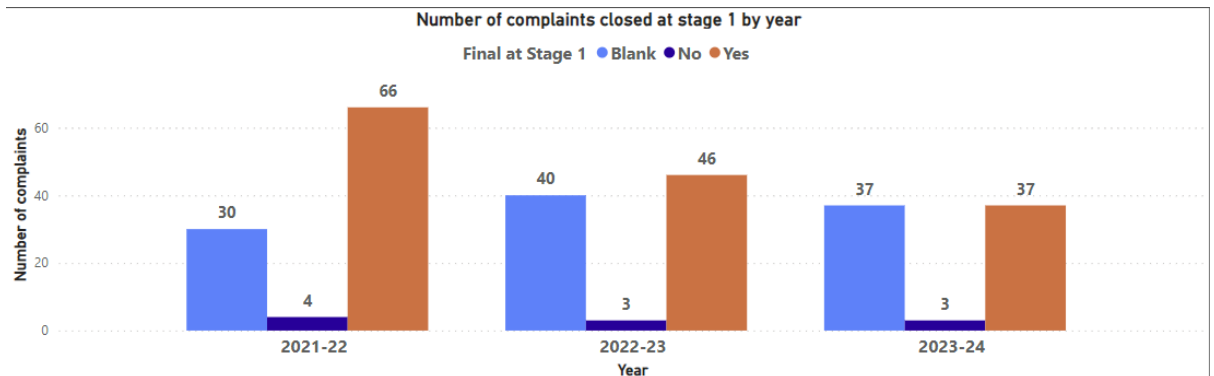


7.2 As can be seen below, in 2023-24 for just over 85% of the complaints where a

response date was provided, the complainant received either an outcome or a holding letter within the organisational policy timeframes of 10 working days. In case of the seven complaints for which response was outside this timeframe the range was between 12-21 days. In terms of comparison with the previous years the number of missing data points make any parallels in terms of trends difficult.



7.3 If dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at Stage 1, complainants have 10 working days to lodge an appeal. In 2023-24, three people escalated their complaint to Stage 2. In terms of numbers this is consistent with previous years although in terms of % of the total complaints this is more than in the previous years. Furthermore, in only one case there was evidence that the Stage 2 complaint has been investigated and the complainant provided with the outcome.



8. Audit trail

8.1 As part of the robust complaint management and audit trail, there is a requirement that all correspondence and other information is uploaded to the case management system in RF Connect. In 2023-24 the compliance with this requirement has been inadequate with the relevant records only uploaded in 28% of complaints. In case of the reminder of complaints, the questions about uploading documents were either left blank or “no” response was recorded. Compared to the previous two years, there has been less compliance with this requirement than in 2021-22 (42%) and

2022-23 (34%).

9. Learning from complaints

9.1 Below are main themes drawn from the learning identified by managers dealing with complaints. Improvements related to services processes, quality of practice, staff conduct and

- Upskilling staff in de-escalation and crisis management. Managers setting out clear expectations on code of conduct and professional boundaries for staff including agency. Strengthening agency staff induction and regular meetings with the agency provider to ensure any issues are resolved promptly.
- Improved service processes included ensuring clear and timely communication within the team, people using the service and external stakeholders. Review of service medication processes.
- The landlord (not RF) was delaying the completion of the repair works on a property that was deemed to be in a sub-standard condition. Staff moved tenants to another property because the state of the facilities did not render the property they were occupying suitable as shared accommodation and to allow the landlord to complete necessary void works.

9.2 The organisation has a clear policy and procedure on complaints management process and recording. The Quality and Compliance team can be contacted for support where required. The Quality and Compliance team regularly monitors compliance with managing and documenting complaint investigation process. However, it is evident that further support is needed in this area to improve compliance and practice. The team will be working with the managers from the operational and central teams to explore any issues in this area and implement appropriate measures to improve recording of complaints management in the coming year.

10. Complaints to the Ombudsman

10.1 Ombudsman investigations are complaints that have been escalated by people using our services or others who have fully completed the complaints process and are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

10.2 Housing Ombudsman have not investigated or received any complaints in relation to Richmond Fellowship in 2023-2024.

10.3 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) have not received or decided any complaints in relation to Richmond Fellowship.