

# Annual Complaints Report 2008/9



## Background

This report is intended to provide a summary of Complaints raised by customers of the service over the previous year. It will take into account formal complaints and queries raised by Councillors through the Members Enquiry process. It provides information to the reader on the Complaint Process in place at Ashfield Homes.

## Purpose

The purpose of any complaint process is to deliver improvements to the service and as such complaints from customers should be welcomed as an opportunity to deliver continued improvements in the long term. The purpose of this report is to present facts regarding the complaints received and lessons learned from those complaints.

## Summary of Key Issues

This report focuses on Formal Complaints which are recorded and monitored by the Performance & Business Improvement Team and provides details about the types of complaint, the action taken to resolve and whether they are justified are contained within the report. Also Members Enquiries are also monitored by the Performance & Business Improvement Team and details are also contained within the report.

### The total number of complaints

Total number of resolved complaints in the year	2006/7	2007/08	2008/9	Variance
Formal	76	78	70	-8

The Formal Complaint system is broken down into 2 stages, with stage two being an appeal to the Chief Executive. The following table shows the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2.

Total number of formal complaints escalated to Stage 2	2006/7	2007/08	2008/9	Variance
Formal	5 (6.6%)	10 (13%)	18 (26%)	+8

This figure has seen an increase in the last year. In the era of tenant empowerment this increase could be due to tenants having a greater awareness of processes and understanding their rights.

Performance in responding to complaints is shown in the table below. Ashfield Homes monitors the average time taken to resolve complaints. However for

the purposes of this report we have also identified the percentage of complaints actioned in 5 working days.

Average Time to resolve complaints	2006/7	2007/08	2008/9
Average working days	3.0	3.3	1.95
Percentage in 5 working days	87%	86%	95.71%

It is not always possible to resolve a complaint within the timescale of 5 working days. This will normally be due to the complexity of the complaint, which may require an investigation involving a number of people including correspondence between ourselves and other partner organisations.

Internal Audits and external audits are undertaken across all service areas, which include reviews of Complaints received. Over the last 12 months the approach to dealing with complaints has been found to be satisfactory.

## Upheld Complaints

Complaints are monitored by the Performance Team and assessed as to whether they are justified or not by the Company Solicitor & Secretary. The following table shows the percentage of complaints that are deemed justified as a proportion of all complaints received, broken down by each area of the Company.

Percentage of complaints deemed Justified	2007/8 Percent Justified	Complaints as a proportion of all complaints received	2008/9 Percent Justified	Complaints as a proportion of all complaints received
Repairs	12%	42.31%	22.86%	51.43%
Lettings	8.33%	15.38%	1.43%	10%
Major Works	50%	7.69%	1.43%	10%
Housing Management/Tenancy Services	15.4%	33.33%	11.43%	21.43%
Supported Housing	0%	1.28%	1.43%	4.29%
HR	N/A	N/A	2.85%	2.85%

## Complaint Categories

The chart below shows the types of formal complaints we have received, this includes both justified and unjustified complaints. The purpose for including unjustified complaints is that although as an organisation we may believe the process has been properly applied there is a perception amongst customers at least, that the service has failed the customer. If we are to deliver improved satisfaction, we need to consider how we tackle customer perception issues. A complaint may raise more than one issue, the numbers in this chart will not correspond with the total number of complaints. A more detailed analysis of complaints logged can be found at page 11

Issue	2007/08 All Complaints Occurrences	2007/08 Justified Complaints Occurrences	2008/09 All Complaints Occurrences	2008/09 Justified Complaints Occurrences
Attitude/Conduct of employee	13	1	12	2
Length of time taken	37	6	37	17
Poor Workmanship	8	4	8	5
Appointment not kept	3		2	2
Poor Communication	17	3	8	3
State of Property (Internal/External)	9	1	7	3
Conduct of Neighbours	11		1	0
Not received requested improvement	2		2	1
Accuracy of information	7	2	10	3
Documents lost/not processed	3	0	2	2
Unhappy with decision	1	0	1	1

## Lessons Learnt

A key part of any complaint process is how the information is used to drive the improvement programme.

The complaint process has an in built improvement programme whereby Managers are expected to identify lessons learnt and to enact them. This initiative was successfully introduced in 2006/7 and has continued throughout 2007/08 & 2008/09.

Below is an extract of some recommended actions from complaints identified by Managers;

**“When appointments are cancelled, AHL must telephone the tenant to inform them that we are not attending.”**

**“Ensure housing applicants are fully aware they will not be offered properties whilst the application is on 'hold' due to former tenant arrears.”**

**“Notify tenants when repairs are planned to advise of the timescale and process involved, for example priority 249 jobs.”**

**“Ensure follow up work identified is communicated effectively to the relevant officers. Officers to also make sure that follow up repairs are inputted on the system.”**

**“Notes on to the Community Alarm Service Users system stating the location of the phone i.e. downstairs, if the tenant is in bed they would be able to hear us and vice-versa, this note prompts the officer to contact the named contact immediately in an emergency.”**

**“Improve joint working between departments and develop sign posting to other organisations to provide support for Tenants that are experiencing difficulty in maintaining their garden.”**

## Diversity Monitoring

Ashfield Homes monitors the profile of those persons making formal complaints.

We monitor by:-

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Gender

The following table shows the number of complaints from these groups.

### 2006/7

Category	Number of complaints	Comments
<b>Age</b>		
Under 35	15	80% were from young women, 20% from men
35-59	18	44% female, 56% male
60-74	6	33% female, 50% male and 17% not specified
Over 75	5	100% female, 0 male
Not specified	32	
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White British	44	
Other White Background	1	
Not specified	31	
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes	14	
No	29	
Not specified	33	
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	29	
Male	17	
Not specified	30	

### 2007/8

Category	Number of complaints	Comments
<b>Age</b>		
Under 35	12	92% were from young women, 8% from men
35-59	18	39% female, 56% male, 5% not specified
60-74	6	50% female, 50% male
Over 74	3	67% female, 33% male
Not specified	39	

<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White British	39	
Other White Background	1	
Indian	1	
Not specified	37	
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes	10	
No	26	
Not specified	42	
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	28	
Male	17	
Not specified	33	

**2008/9**

Category	Number of complaints	Comments	STATUS 2008
<b>Age</b>			
Under 35	11	Of which, 91% were from young women 9% men	Different age bands measured
35-59	22	Of which, 46% from women 64% men	
60-74	5	Of which, 40% women 60% men	
Over 75	6	Of which, 50% from women 33% from men and 17% not stated	
Not specified	26	37%	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
British	41	59% of total complainants	94%
Other	2	3% of total complainants	0.7%
White & Black African	1	1% of total complainants	0%
Any other White background	1	1% of total complainants	0.9%
Not specified	25	36% of total complainants	2%
<b>Disability</b>			
Yes	19	27% of total complainants	62.8%
No	19	27% of total complainants	34.5%
Not specified	32	46% of total complainants	2.4%

<b>Gender</b>			
Female	30	43 % of total complainants	54.2%
Male	21	30% of total complainants	35.8%
Not specified	19	27% of total complainants	10%

Investigation and analysis conducted by the Performance & Business Improvement team suggests the methods that complaints are made effect the diversity percentage representation. 20% of complaints were made via letter and therefore diversity information can not be gathered for these. Customers are also not forced to complete the diversity section when making a complaint via the complaints booklet or via the website.

## Accessing the Complaint Process

Customers can access the complaint process in a variety of ways. The table below shows how people access the system.

There are now a large number of people who are using the Ashfield Homes website to access the complaints scheme. This demonstrates that use of the internet is becoming more commonplace amongst Ashfield Tenants.

29 people contacted us about complaints via the AHL website. This represents 42% of the total number of complaints which is an increase reduction on the 42% of last year.

### Website

Age breakdown of those who used the web facility (excluding those who failed to specify their age).	2007/08	2008/09	Variance
up to 35	46%	26%	-11
35 to 59	38%	65%	-27
60 to 74	16%	4%	-12
over 74 years old	0%	4%	+4

The table above shows there has been a reduction in the younger age group using the web. Furthermore of those who complained by e-mail and gave gender details 94% (68%) were women (32%) were men. The level of women has decreased by 26, there has been a noticeable increase in complaints by men.

In the table below demonstrates that an increase has been seen in the number of younger people using Complaints forms.

## Complaints Forms

Age breakdown of those who used the Complaint Form (excluding those who failed to specify their age).	2007/08	2008/09	Variance
up to 35	20%	24%	+4
35 to 59	50%	33%	-17
60 to 74	17%	19%	+2
over 74 years old	13%	24%	+11

Overall 36% of people used the Complaint Form, whilst 20% sent a letter of complaint.

## Member Enquiries

Ashfield Homes has a process whereby local Councillors can make an enquiry by completing an appropriate form which is then forwarded to the Performance Team. A response is then made either directly to the customer or to the Councillor. These enquiries do not always constitute a complaint but are merely requests for information or requests for service.

The details of the types of query and the service area are contained in the table below:

	Performance & Business Improvement	Depot	Depot & NST	Lettings	Neighbourhood Safety Team	Procurement	Supported Housing	Tenancy Services
2006/07	1	19	1	12	1	1	2	4
2007/08	0	21	N/A	2	N/A	0	0	3
2008/09	0	10	N/A	1	N/A	3	0	0

This shows that the majority of queries raised by Councillors relates to repairs and lettings.

## Local Government Ombudsman

During 2008/9 there have been no decisions of maladministration against Ashfield Homes by the Ombudsman.

## Summary of Complaints

Below is a more detailed summary of the complaints received during the year.

### Complaints Summary 2008/09

Unhappy with the response time to fast leaking radiator valve and the consequent loss of heating.

Emergency repair to leaking radiator valve undertaken.

Waiting for box room plastering to be completed, kitchen cupboards on wall missing worktop, also asked last week about bathroom tiles replacing heard nothing.

Unhappy with length of time been on waiting list after splitting up with partner and the speed with which other persons have been re-housed.

An Electrician came out to fix our shower unit, but unfortunately he wasn't able to do it.

Being made to wait for a repair to the outhouse door after a break-in to the outhouse all our items in the shed are valuable and for your surveyor that came out to measure to tell us to remove our valuable into the house and store it until the repair is actioned. We have no storage in this property this is ridiculous also this repair would be paid by your insurance people and not your repairs budget so how come we have to wait so long?

Reported a banging noise heard in my flat to repairs since this initial report I have had several visits and have been told there was nothing wrong even though a member of Ashfield Homes repairs heard the banging.

My grandma has been without heating for 3 weeks causing her to get bronchitis. Ashfield council have been to my grandmas house 5 times done nothing until uncle started complaining as well. AHL brought her a heater and then tried to collect it before the heating was fixed. The heating was finally fixed 3 weeks after the first report was made by grandma.

Phoned the repairs centre approx 3 weeks ago to report a major leaking pipe under my kitchen sink however because I do not finish work until late in the evenings, and that because I had tried to isolate the leak and still had water supply in the bathroom that it was not deemed as an emergency.

Received a letter in 2007 stating insulation will be updated also reported repair to door waited a long time before any contact was made.

Unhappy they were not notified appointment had been cancelled.

Unhappy with the service received with regard to request for help with maintaining garden and subsequent action taken.

Tenant unhappy with the length of time taken to sort out garden.

Unhappy with the length of time and information provided on terminating a tenancy.

Tenant unhappy they have been informed no further action will be taken with regard to ASB being experienced from neighbours.

Unhappy decoration vouchers were declined when wanting to buy a tool for decorating rather than paint etc.

Unhappy with the length of time she has been on the housing waiting list. Has two children who are beginning to need their own rooms.

Pressed pendant on 3 occasions on same day and did not get response from call centre- this led to a fall and hospitalisation

Unhappy that estates officers have cut back rose bush that trails along the boundary with garage plot, whilst carrying out routine clearance of garage site. Compensation was requested as this is the second time this has happened.

Complaint about the state of garages on Forest Road, in high winds asbestos roofs are coming to pieces. Bags of asbestos have been left at site and not yet collected.

Tomlinson's have contacted tenant regarding boiler. Tenant is upset as she has rung them and explained boiler has already been serviced. She found the staff patronising, arrogant and rude.

Complaint 1 unhappy with the fitting of Double glazed front door and service provided by Permadoor when called out. Complaint 2 unhappy with the attitude of person at repairs call centre. Was told AHL could not make an appointment  
Rubbish was left on the garden when moved into property. Has requested help to move it but has been told that it is tenant's responsibility; tenant doesn't feel it is her duty as it is not her rubbish.

Unhappy with the conclusions drawn from recent visit made re fitting of front door.  
Tenant unhappy that when rang call centre at 9.35pm to request ANWS they were told wardens had logged off. The person did not take any further details from the caller. This is not the first time this has happened. The caller rang direct and wardens turned up.

Previously requested repair to door in block, door still needs repairing.

Unhappy with the information provided by member of staff and the staff members attitude.

Unhappy that repair that was supposed to be completed by April 2008 is still outstanding.

Unhappy with the length of time taken to resolve a leak at the top of the garden that leads to water logging.

Unhappy with the length of time taken to deal with a leak in property. Sat in waiting for repair several days running.

Roof tile not replaced from May, Roof leaks into kitchen onto boiler. Repairs were due out by 11th August nobody turned up. Letter received asking about work done, recalled repairs to state that work was not done, job rebooked but no date given.

Moved into property with son and gave birth to second child. Son was born with asthma and was told by Ashfield Homes that if I didn't take this property I wouldn't be offered anywhere else. I struggle to get up stairs with the children and the pushchairs and the lady downstairs moans at us for talking on the stairs.

Gas Fire has been condemned, wants a bath fitted, Problem with boiler pressure and servicing. Unhappy with the quality of work undertaken, also not happy with phone calls not being returned and appointments not being pre arranged.

Took tenancy of property, I feel I was pressured into taking this property for the following reasons. I wasn't made aware I didn't have to accept this and I had a number of choices. I was told I wouldn't get a house as I didn't have enough points (even though I had been nominated for a house to a Housing Association) I wasn't given enough time to look properly at this property - (a couple of hours).

Unhappy that visit was paid without prior appointment. Felt the staff attitude was a bit heavy handed.

Damage done to tiles in kitchen due to electricians. Taken along time to complete job.

On accepting tenancy tenants were told that work was to be done to the property and that it was due to be refurbished. None of this has yet been done.

Complainant was on the housing waiting list with 65 points; he was attacked at his workplace and was forced to leave his home due to threats. He was then living on the streets of Nottingham on moving back to Hucknall, applied for housing and was given 60 points due to change of circumstances. Says he has mental issues and feel an injustice has been done and doesn't want it to happen to anyone else.

Unhappy that Job application form failed to submit once it was completed on-line.

Today I received a letter re: condition of my garden, saying there is a large amount of weeds and the hedge is overgrown on the front garden.

Unhappy with the length of time it has taken to conduct repair.

Unhappy with the attitude of Senior HMA , she showed no empathy for situation.

Various problems raised with the tenant regarding major works issues.

Person who answered lifeline told grand daughter they could not call ambulance as tenant was not on her own. Tenant very unhappy that support centre was not helpful in this situation has lost faith in the service.

Unhappy that when incident reported nobody came out to investigate.

Unhappy that a repair has still not been made to gas fire after two inspections have taken place.

Problems occurred when completing an on line application. As a result of having problems a few weeks ago I successfully saved on 3 occasions to complete later. At the final stages when I have taken 2 1/2 hrs to complete your application the system failed yet again. Also why if I had saved it can I no longer view my saved work?

Unhappy major works have not been conducted.

Unhappy with the length of time it has taken to remove his partner from tenancy. Unhappy with the lack of feedback and calls not being returned. Has reported the broken door at the back of his block on several occasions.

Unhappy with the quality of repair work and the length of time taken to arrange appointment.

Unhappy with the extent of light provided by Street light outside home.

Unhappy with the conduct of workmen in home. Left carpet dirty and hand marks over walls. Did not clean up properly after themselves.

Unhappy that the property signed up to had a flea infestation which has not been resolved even after problem was reported.

The residents of the five bungalows have suffered a breakdown in the heating supply on many occasions since 11th November on one occasion for 6 days. Although we were loaned a fan heater it is insufficient to keep the place reasonably warm. It also means of course that we have to pay for the electricity we do not get a heater loaned if the heating is off for a few hours. Yesterday 28th December the heating was off before 6am and is still off today 29th Dec as I write at 3pm it is the middle of a cold winter and we are 80+ years old. We would like a reliable heat supply for which we pay every week.

In November 2007 my mother had her 6ft fencing stolen and reported it to the police and got a crime number. The council came and put a 3ft fence which I complained about. An inspector came out and told me that a building firm would be out and replace it.

Unhappy with telephone calls not being returned and the poor state of the court they live in.

Unhappy with the workmanship and length of time taken with regard to Plaster work and re-fitting of window. Also unhappy with the lack of information provided regarding who to contact for a new door.

Complainant has been informed he cannot apply for a property until rent arrears have been cleared on a property he previously rented from ADC. Complainant claims he never has been a Tenant of the property as he declined the offer.

No heating for 6 days.

Unhappy with the length of time taken to repair fence and lack of information about timescale involved in repair.

I can confirm that during a visit by one of our Heating Engineers, minor repairs were identified which weren't of an urgent nature. Heating system was left fully operational at the time of the visit.

# A summary of the complaint process

