



# Complaints, Compliments and Concerns Annual Report

1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023



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# THE GIFT OF FEEDBACK

Brunelcare is committed to continuously improving the quality of services it provides by understanding the experiences of people accessing those services. The Board of Brunelcare recognises that in order to continue to make improvements, it is essential to encourage, value, engage with and learn from all types of feedback.

The Charity has a learning culture and a strong commitment to putting things right when a need for improvement has been identified. This is done by acknowledging any mistakes and assessing the need for change, whether that be a review of any relevant procedures or addressing training requirements for employees that have been identified as part of the complaints process.

# **THE GIFT OF FEEDBACK**

In September 2021, we established the role of Complaints Officer in order to provide our customers with a neutral contact and to support our customers to voice their opinions - for example helping tenants access advocacy services, helping tenants formulate and submit their complaint and offering communication in different formats and languages.

Our Complaints Officer oversees the complaints process and ensures that complaints and concerns are reviewed, resolved and learnt from. The Board's Performance, Quality and Experience Committee review trends and compliance with the key performance measures set out in our Managing Comments, Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Policy on a quarterly basis.

Brunelcare takes the approach that complaints, concerns and compliments raised are gifts. Without feedback from our customers, we have fewer opportunities to develop as an organisation and as individuals.

To continue to develop Brunelcare's process in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, our policy and process for handling complaints was reviewed in 2022-23. As a result, an updated Managing Comments, Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Policy was agreed by the Board in December 2022.

A new centralised approach to the management of Comments, Concerns, Complaints and Compliments went live in September 2021. Brunelcare's website provides clear and accessible information for our customers on our complaints process, as well as forms so feedback and complaints can be easily submitted. This information can be found at our Contact Us page.

Brunelcare's Complaints Officer provided briefings and training on the updated Complaints Policy and Procedure to colleagues across all of Brunelcare's services, and new colleagues are provided with an overview of the complaints process on joining the Charity.

## **OUR POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

We created materials like posters and leaflets to highlight that Brunelcare values complaints, and to help raise awareness with tenants on how to complain, where to get help making a complaint and what they can expect from the process.

Complaints, concerns and compliments are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and the Performance, Quality and Experience (PQ&E) Committee on a quarterly basis. The full Board is provided with complaints information through the PQ&E Committee Chair's assurance report to the Board.

Phil Hope, Trustee and Senior Independent Director (SID), is the Trustee Lead for Speaking Up and Complaints.

## **OUR POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

# Our Policy states that colleagues will be:

- Empowered and trained to deal with concerns as they arise with the aim of resolving issues immediately. This training will be provided during their induction period;
- Trained to recognise the seriousness of a concern and understand when it should be referred to more senior members of staff;
- Trained and encouraged to provide appropriate information on advice and advocacy support at Stage 1 of the process. However, it is recognised that they may not have (nor could they be expected to) have the breadth of knowledge of all organisations for all types of help available, particularly when operating in a specialist field themselves. Nevertheless, a housing officer, for example, should be sufficiently knowledgeable to advise a complainant with a housing complaint about the services of organisations such as Shelter.

# Definitions



## Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction (written or verbal), about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Brunelcare, its employees, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers



## Compliments

Brunelcare recognises that compliments are also a valuable source of feedback. Positive feedback received regarding services can provide an opportunity to acknowledge improvements and successes, to recognise good practise, and to apply this across other areas.



## Concerns

Concerns are defined as issues which may require further enquiry, advice or information in order to resolve them, and can be resolved within 48 hours. These are best dealt with by the service in which the concern originated. When a concern is raised which cannot be satisfactorily resolved without an investigation or within 48 hours, then it is to be processed as a complaint.



# THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

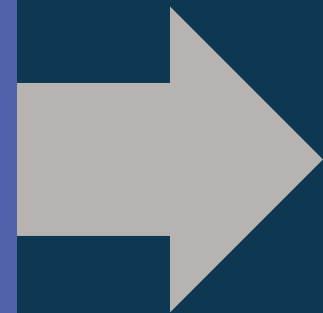
Brunelcare is committed to making its complaints procedure as easily accessible as possible. We recognise that some customers may find it difficult to engage with the complaints process and explain their concerns. We will:

- Offer advice and support to customers to ensure that the complaints process is fully accessible to customers.
- Consider all requests for reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and will implement adjustments where it is practicable to do so.
- Share information in a way that meets the customers' individual needs.

# The complaints process

## Frontline Resolution

We encourage all our staff to deal with issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity to avoid necessary stress for our customers and to ensure the issue is dealt with efficiently and effectively. This is part of frontline service delivery. However, there will be matters that cannot be addressed quickly and will need a full investigation.



## Stage 1

'Investigate once, investigate well' is the principle for this stage of the process. An investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to give the complainant a full, objective and proportionate response that represents Brunelcare's final position.

### All Stage 1 complaints will be:

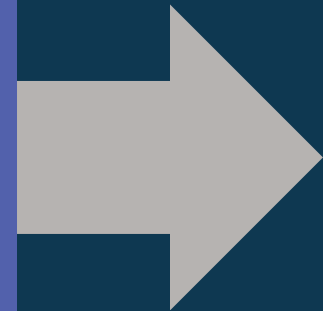
- Formally acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Officer as soon as is possible, but within a maximum of three working days.
- Responded to within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement. Where a longer time is needed, the complainant will be advised of the reasons for this.

# The complaints process

## Stage 2

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage 1 it will be progressed to stage 2.

Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by a senior independent officer and be responded to within 20 working days.



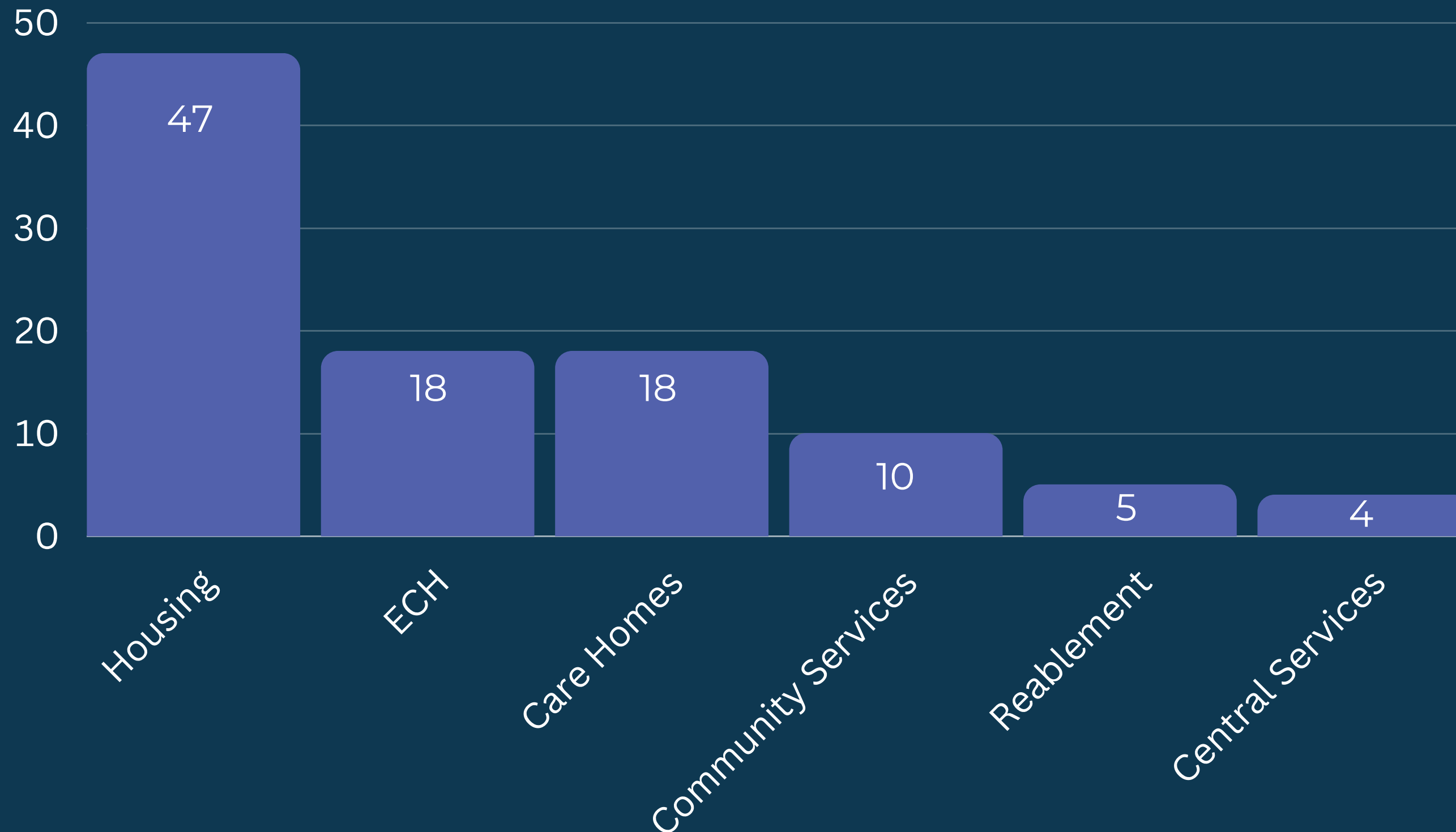
## Ombudsman

Complainants have the right to raise concerns with the relevant ombudsman:

- [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)
- [Housing Ombudsman](#)
- [Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#)

# Number of complaints received

Number of complaints by service



**Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 102 stage 1 complaints were received.**

Any issues related to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were dealt with by the Housing Team under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and not reported as a complaint. Only where a complainant was unhappy with Brunelcare’s handling of the ASB issue or where they felt the issue had not been dealt with appropriately was it considered as a complaint.

**Brunelcare has 926 housing units (this includes sheltered housing, general needs, shared ownership and leasehold properties), and on average we received:**



0.051 complaints per household



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 19.70 households



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 463 households



**Brunelcare has 234 Extra Care Housing units,  
and on average we received:**



0.077 complaints per household



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 13 households



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 58.5 households



**Brunelcare has 334 care home places and on average we received:**



0.054 complaints per place



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 18.56 places



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 334 places



**Brunelcare has 48 reablement places and on average we received:**



0.104 complaints per place



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 9.6 places



0 stage 2 complaints were received relating to reablement services





# How we received complaints

So that our customers can raise an issue with us easily and quickly, we have a number of mechanisms in place by which they can contact us to raise a concern or make a complaint.

**Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 we received:**



87 complaints by email either direct to a colleague or via our complaints or feedback email boxes



6 complaints by telephone



6 complaints by letter



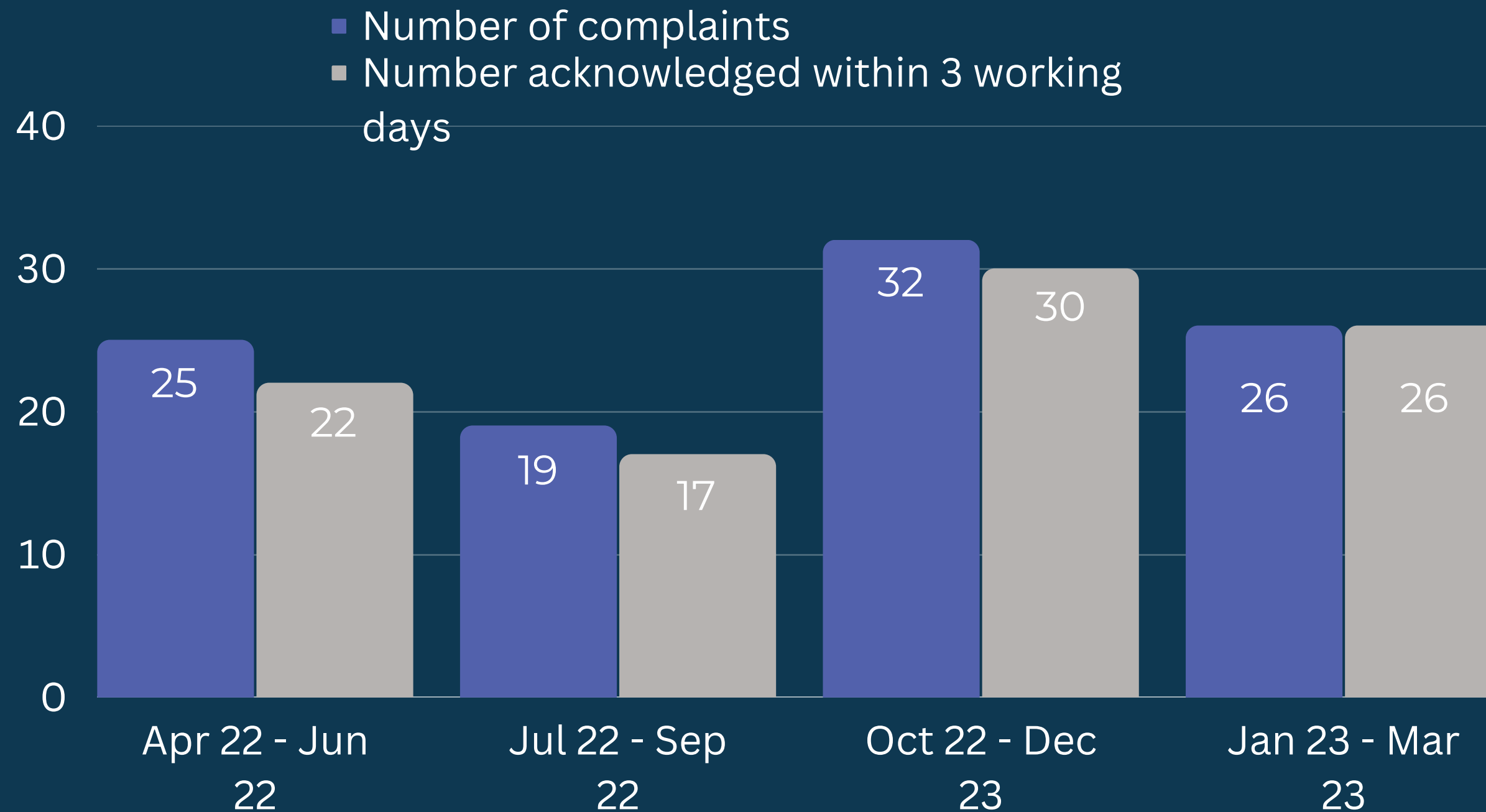
2 complaints were raised in person



1 complaint was made using Facebook

# How quickly do we acknowledge complaints?

Number of complaints acknowledged within 3 working days



Brunelcare’s policy states that complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.

Of the 102 stage 1 complaints received, 93 (93%) were acknowledged within 3 working days.

Compliance has improved during the year from 88% in the period April to June 2022 to 100% in the period January to March 2023.

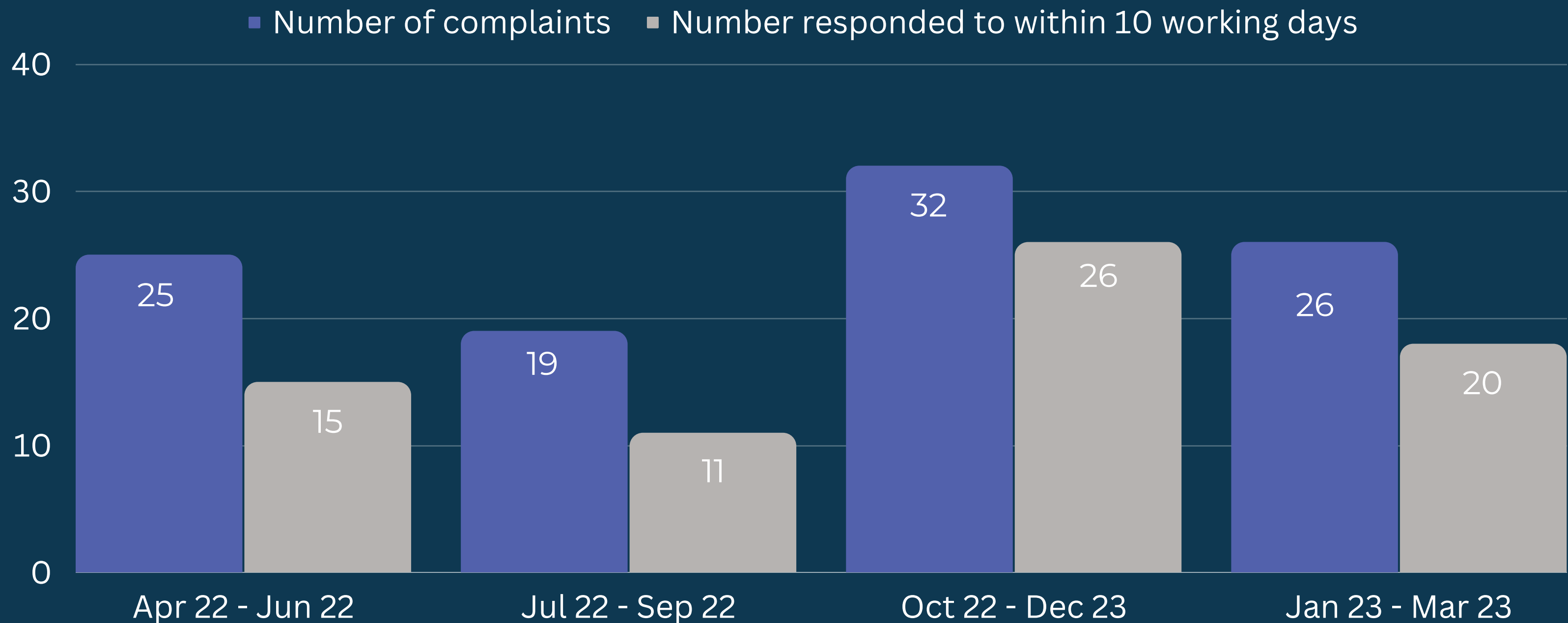
## Reasons for the deadlines set in Brunelcare's policy being breached included:

- The investigating registered manager being on annual leave when the complaint was received
- The initial complaint email going into the complaints spam folder in error
- A new complaint was linked to an earlier complaint and therefore acknowledgement was delayed until the details of the related complaint had been reviewed

Our Policy also states that we will aim to fully respond to complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being logged.

# How quickly do we resolve complaints?

Number of complaints responded to within 10 working days



**This is a deadline that colleagues found difficult to meet due to a range of issues, including:**

- The complexities of the complaint leading to more time required to fully investigate
- Feedback being required from an outside agency as part of the complaints investigation (e.g. a solicitor) and work needing to be completed by a subcontractor
- Further information needing to be sought from the complainant

Brunelcare's Complaints Officer will continue to work with colleagues to support improved compliance with response deadlines. Where we are unable to meet deadlines, the Complaints Officer will ensure that the complainant is kept up to date with progress and an extension is agreed with the complainant, where possible.

# What were the outcomes of complaints?

Of the 102 stage 1 complaints received:

93

were resolved at stage 1

6

were escalated to Stage 2 (one further complaint was escalated to stage 2 following the end of the 2022-23 financial year)

2

were escalated to the Local Government and Social Services Ombudsman

## ECH and housing cases

**During the year, 6 complaints were escalated to stage 2:**

- **3 ECH complaints;**
- **2 housing complaints; and**
- **1 care home complaint**

All three of the ECH stage 2 complaints raised related to a similar issue; utility bills and the heating system at one of our ECH sites. In each case the complaint was investigated and further information is being given to residents through Quarterly Site Meetings. A report has also been commissioned by an external contractor and the outcome of this will be shared with tenants at the site, once available.

One housing complaint related to the provision of communal equipment, control of the site's heating thermostat and storage facilities at the site. This was investigated and a solution regarding the provision of communal equipment agreed with the tenant. Clearer signage and rules regarding site storage were also put in place.

One housing complaint concerned communication between Brunelcare and a subcontractor which resulted in delays in repairs to a site's water heating system. The Director of Housing Services completed the stage 2 investigation and agreed to ensure communication be discussed at upcoming Repairs Team meetings and that the Repairs Manager lead a lessons learned meeting to which the tenants be invited.

**During the year, 6 complaints were escalated to stage 2:**

- **3 ECH complaints;**
- **2 housing complaints; and**
- **1 care home complaint**

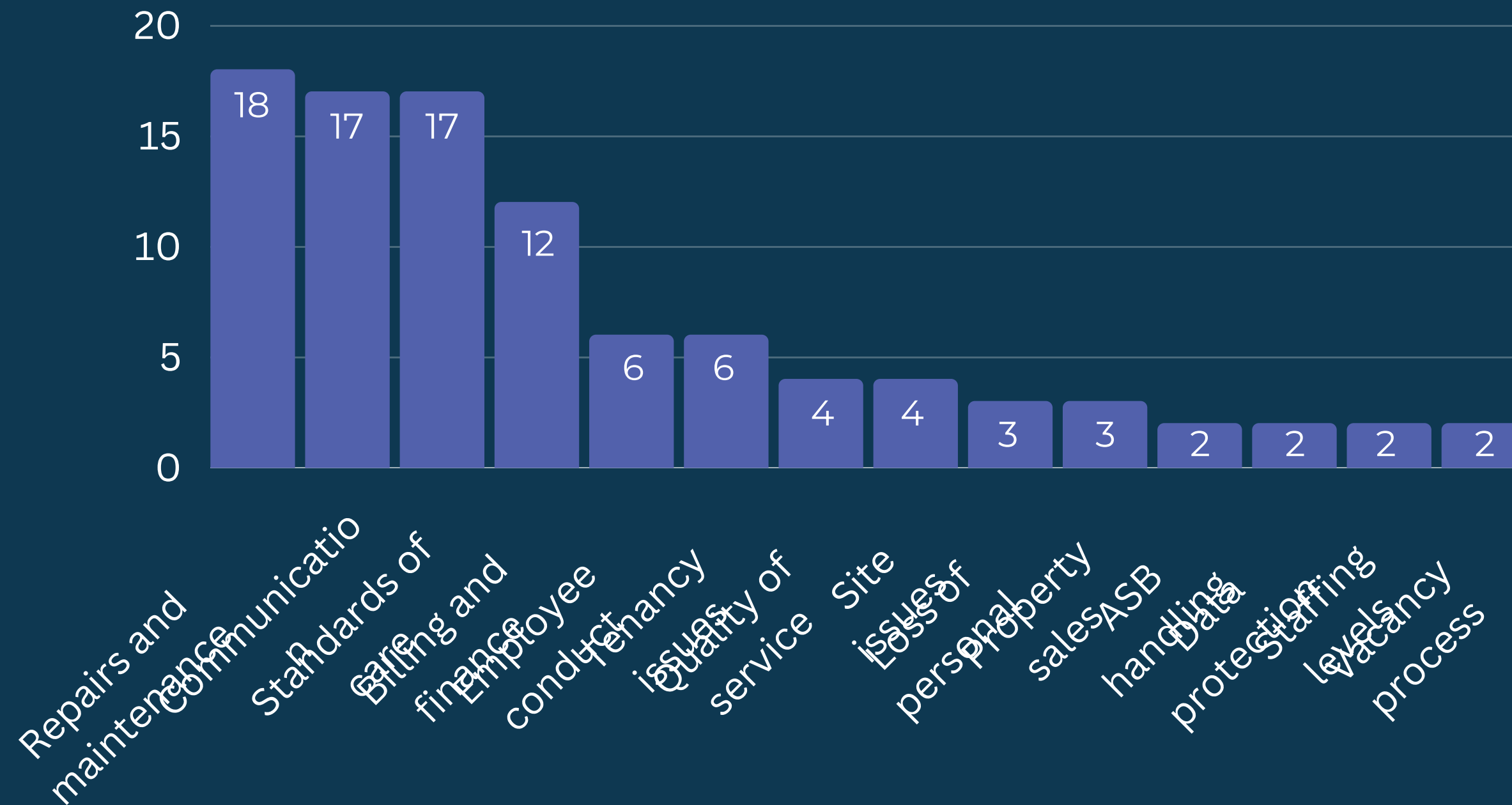
## **Care homes**

The stage 2 care home complaint related to the billing of arrears and poor communication about a resident's outstanding debt. An internal investigation was conducted which found that the financial information was correct however it was acknowledged that communication regarding outstanding debts could have been made clearer. This complaint was referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Actions regarding the communication of arrears were recommended by the Ombudsman and implemented.



# Issues raised in complaints, learning and improvement

Complaint subject areas



Brunelcare provides a range of services, and therefore the complaints received during the reporting period were similarly diverse. Issues of concern raised in more than one complaint are detailed in this chart.

A single complaint was raised against the following areas: call times, energy usage, health and safety, and medication.

## **Brunelcare uses any comments, concerns, complaints and compliments received to:**

- Identify what is working well through compliment trends and share good practice.
- Help identify potential service problems through trends in concerns raised, acting as an early warning system.
- Highlight potential system failure and or human error to identify need for improvement.
- Provide the information required to review services and procedures effectively, responding to requests for customer experience data for service reviews/evaluations.

## Here are a few examples which demonstrate how we have learnt from the complaints, raised by our customers:

### You told us:

17% of complaints related to Repairs and Maintenance. These included a number of complaints regarding planned works being undertaken by an external contractor.

### We:

Improved communication processes and recruited an additional Multi-trade operative and a Repairs Team Leader to improve the service provided by Brunelcare and communication with subcontractors. We are developing a new housing management system which will provide better tracking of works in progress and allow both customers and sub-contractors access to that portal for greater transparency and communication.

## Here are a few examples which demonstrate how we have learnt from the complaints, raised by our customers:

### You told us:

12% of complaints related to billing and financial issues. These complaints related to incorrect utility bills at one of our ECH sites and communication regarding arrears of care fees.

### We:

Investigated how bills were calculated and kept affected tenants updated with regular meetings. Following this investigation a report was commissioned by an external contractor and this will be presented to tenants following its conclusion. Communication processes have also improved regarding informing customers where arrears have accumulated.

## Here are a few examples which demonstrate how we have learnt from the complaints, raised by our customers:

### You told us:

A family member was unhappy with the care received by their loved one in the community, including the length of call times, that arranged call times were not kept, how carers attended the property and how this was recorded within their relative's care plan

### We:

The Community Services Manager completed an in-depth investigation and found that whilst call times had been amended due to employee sickness within the service this had not been communicated clearly with the customer and steps would be taken to ensure this occurred for customers in the future. A meeting was arranged with the relative and the customer to review the support plan in place to ensure support needs are met. A team meeting was also arranged to reinforce correct attendance procedures.

## Here are a few examples which demonstrate how we have learnt from the complaints, raised by our customers:

### You told us:

A customer raised a complaint regarding the location of rubbish and recycling bins at a site, noting that these were placed at the bottom of a slope and under a tree which may cause health and safety issues in icy weather.

### We:

The Health and Safety Advisor attended the site to speak to tenants, assess the risks posed and to review the position of bins. Actions that may be taken to reduce risks were highlighted and alternative locations for the bins were considered. Due to the suggested alternative locations removing a parking space and being in view of some tenants' properties, a full consultation was held with tenants to allow them to decide where the bins should be located.

# Case Study 1: Housing / Subcontractors

## Situation

Mr A lives in a sheltered housing site and complained that following a period of heavy rain, landscape gardeners contracted by Brunelcare mowed the grass and cut back shrubs which caused damage to the lawn which was a source of great pride for residents who spend time in maintaining the gardens.

## Outcome

Brunelcare's Repairs Inspector checked the damage caused and raised this with the Manager of the contracted landscape gardening team. The Manager visited the site to inspect the damage and apologise to the concerned tenant. The difficulties of undertaking landscaping work in poor weather were discussed and it was confirmed that the landscaping team would take more care to ensure areas were reviewed prior to planned works taking place to guarantee that they were suitable for work to be conducted prior to it taking place.

# Standards of care complaints

17% of complaints related to standards of care. The majority of complaints in this category were raised by relatives and related to the care and support provided to their loved ones. All complaints were fully investigated and action taken to respond to the concerns raised. The following cases studies provide insight into how such matters were investigated.



# Case study 2: Extra Care Housing

## Situation

Ms B said that her mother was very happy living in her flat at an Extra Care Housing site but the experience had been marred by the delays the family had experienced when trying to sell the flat.

## Outcome

The Housing Manager carried out a thorough investigation, contacting the solicitor involved and establishing the events leading to the complaint and clarifying dates and charges. It was discovered that the delays were caused by information not being passed from the sellers' solicitor to Brunelcare's solicitor and notwithstanding, the process took three months which is not unusual for the sale of a property. The investigation did highlight a delay of 12 days in obtaining the requisite signatures from Brunelcare for which the Housing Manager offered apologies and a credit of £273.94 in compensation.

# Case study 3: Reablement

## Situation

Mr C complained that the discharge of his father had been confusing, with different information being given about a suitable bed, and reablement plan of care by various agencies involved.

## Outcome

The Reablement Manager investigated thoroughly, speaking to all agencies involved within a day of the complaint. The Social Worker, Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist gave different information regarding a suitable bed on discharge, as the guest's mobility had improved prior to his discharge date. The family agreed to buy a new bed and whilst waiting for it to arrive, the Reablement Centre agreed to extend the guest's stay, acknowledging the family's confusion and apologising for any distress. A meeting was held with all agencies to prevent recurrence and improve communication through greater use of the central plan of care.

# Case study 4: Community Services

## Situation

Mrs D complained that, having paid all her invoices, she was still receiving letters from Brunelcare informing her she was in arrears.

## Outcome

The Community Services Manager liaised with the Finance Team to ensure all the arrears were accurate and that payments had not been received in the interim. Mrs D was upset by this and it was agreed that her regular carer whom she knows and trusts discuss this with her at the next home visit. It was discovered that two cheques had been made out to Brunelcare but not posted. This reduced the debt considerably. It was acknowledged that confusion had been caused by the accounting practice of matching new payments to the earliest outstanding debt. Greater effort has since been made to improve communication and show clearly which payments are taken against which invoices.

# Case study 5: Care Homes

## Situation

Mr E complained about the behaviour of another resident in the Care Home saying that he felt threatened when visiting the home and was concerned for his relative's safety.

## Outcome

The Care Home Manager responded with an apology and acknowledgement that some dementia behaviour can be challenging. On the family's next visit, a meeting was arranged so that the family could be reassured of steps taken to manage challenging behaviour and risks to other residents and visitors. Better communication with families surrounding the care of residents and their interaction with the challenges faced in the home, was felt to be beneficial to prevent future anxiety.

# Compliments received



49

compliments about the services provided by Brunelcare and its employees were received. We continue to work to further improve the recording and reporting of compliments.

# Compliments received

## Housing

“I wish I'd moved here years ago. I was in a flat in another part of Bristol run by another provider. They had astronomical service charges and ground rent and were never available when you tried to contact them. In comparison, this place is like paradise.”

“Thank you for arranging a site meeting at the site in December. We personally thought the meeting was positive and informative and we look forward to more in the new year. We would both like to take this opportunity to thank you for your advice and assistance, and we look forward being called upon in the new year for any advice or help we can give going forward in helping to build a positive relationship with Brunelcare to help maintain living on site a pleasant one in any way we can.”

# Compliments received

## Community Services

“Just to say a big thank you for all the care and support you have given to mum and dad over the last few years. I know there have been many challenges, but your patience and hard work has been hugely appreciated. You all do an amazing job and will be missed.”

“You are amazing! For everyone that cared for my mum, me and my family would like to thank everyone at Brunelcare for caring and helping my mum throughout the years, we appreciate each and every one of you! Thank you.”

# Compliments received

## Care Homes

“I just want to acknowledge the staff at the home for their hard work, compassion and love they show the residents. My mum has lived there for three years and as her needs have increased the staff have worked hard to support her to have a stable "home" life. For me, the staff are always supportive and welcoming, from the Managers to the housekeeping team, I cannot thank them enough. I just wanted you to know how lucky I feel to have found them to look after mum and how lucky you are to have them on your team.”

“My mother recently passed away at the home after being a resident there for four and a half years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful care that she received during this time. Before coming into the care home, she was sleeping about 18 hours a day where she was so under stimulated. The home woke her up! She enjoyed the activities and spending time with the staff. She felt safe and at home. I would particularly like to recognise the following people (employee names supplied) for their outstanding care in providing Mum with the meaningful relationships that she so needed and enjoyed. I also appreciate the housekeepers, cooks, maintenance and other back room service staff without whom the home could not operate and who also interacted with Mum with kindness and compassion.”



**RAISING  
AWARENESS &  
SUPPORTING  
THE  
CUSTOMER**

Continued learning and improvement is reviewed and implemented by the Corporate Governance Team. A self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code was undertaken in September 2022. The outcome of this assessment is available on our website.

# RAISING AWARENESS & SUPPORTING THE CUSTOMER

The assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code identified areas where Brunelcare's Policy could be further enhanced and greater clarity on the process provided. Over the coming months, we will:

- Publish quarterly complaints, concerns and compliments data on our website;
- Provide refresher training for our managers;
- Update our complaints log to make it clearer when a complaint was upheld, resolved or not upheld;
- Re-circulate posters, guidance leaflets and update our acknowledgement and complaint report templates;
- Start to produce year-on-year comparison and trend data;
- Seek ways to benchmark our performance with housing and care organisations.

## More information

Anyone who receives, requests, or is affected by our services can make a complaint. This includes our customers, but also members of the public who could have access to or be affected by our services, including anti-social behaviour/neighbour nuisance.

### You can raise a complaint:



In person at any of our offices or developments by phoning us on 0117 914 4200



By emailing us at [complaints@brunelcare.org.uk](mailto:complaints@brunelcare.org.uk)



In writing to Feedback and Complaints, Brunelcare Head Office, Saffron Gardens, Prospect Place, Bristol, BS5 9FF



By completing and submitting the form on our website.