



Complaints, Compliments and Concerns Annual Report

1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024



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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 continues to be reviewed to reflect best practice and legislative changes. As a result, an updated Managing Comments, Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Policy will be agreed by the Board and published in mid-2024.

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 provides 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.



Service requests

A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not treated as complaints.



Concerns

Concerns are defined as issues which are best resolved at a local level, usually within 48 hours. When a concern is raised which cannot be satisfactorily resolved without an investigation or within 48 hours, it is to be processed as a complaint.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

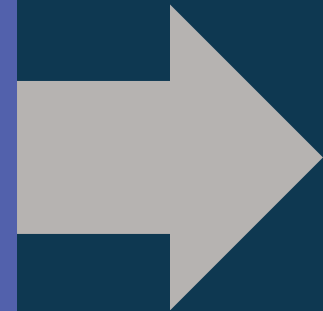
Brunelcare is committed to making its complaints procedure as easily accessible as possible. We recognise that some customers may find it difficult to engage with the complaints process and explain their concerns. We will:

- 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:

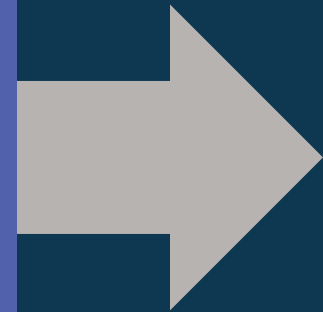
- Formally acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Officer as soon as is possible, but within a maximum of three working days.
- Responded to within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement. Where a longer time is needed, the complainant will be advised of the reasons for this.

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.

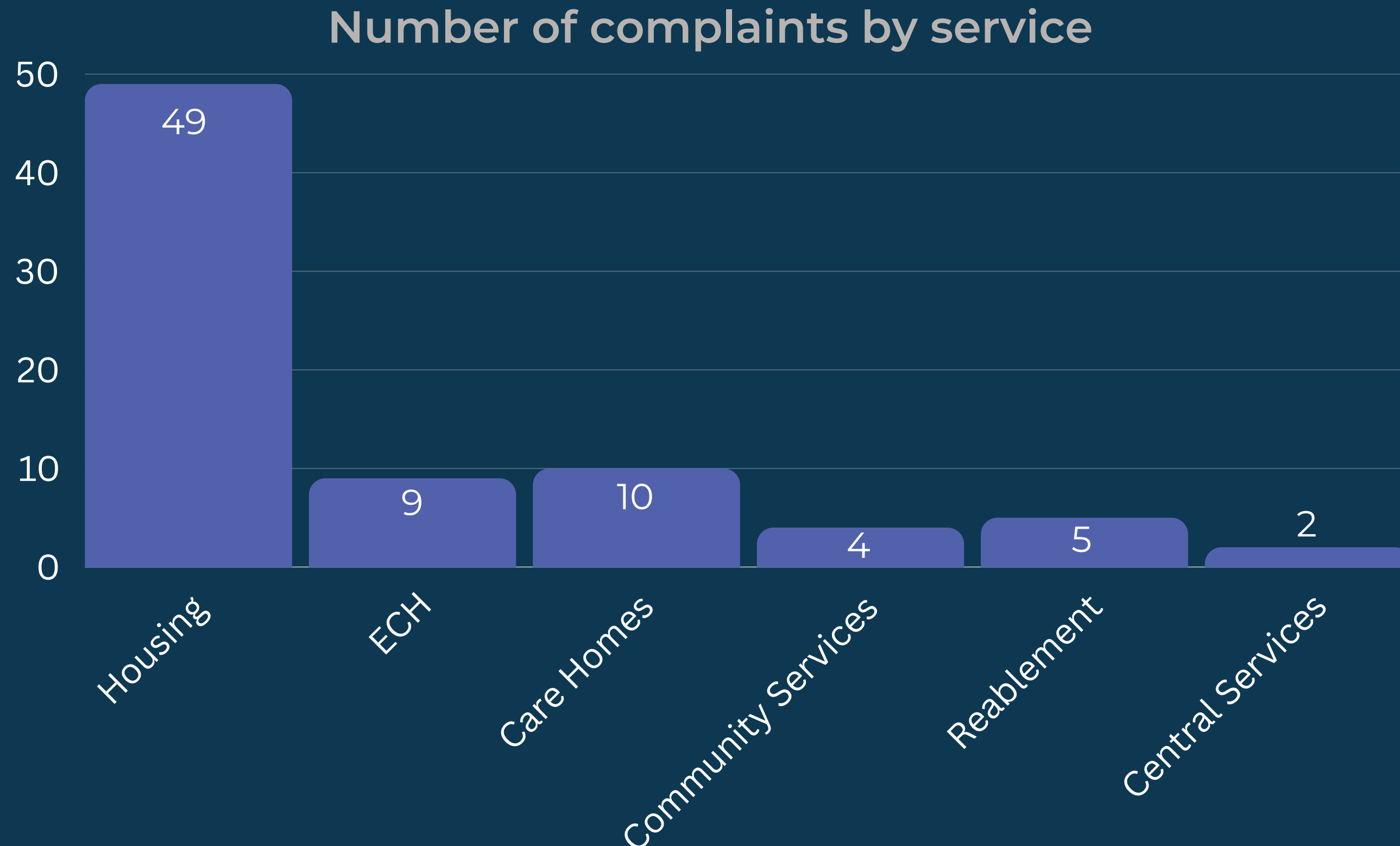


Ombudsman

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



Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, 79 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:



0.053 complaints per household



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 18.9 households



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 92.6 households



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



0.038 complaints per household



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 26 households



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 234 households



Brunelcare has 320 care home places and on average we received:



0.031 complaints per place



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 32 places



1 x stage 2 complaint for every 320 places



Community Services across South Gloucestershire and Somerset provide support to approximately 260 people in their own homes, and on average we received:



0.015 complaints per client



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 65 clients



0 stage 2 complaints were received relating to community services



Brunelcare has 64 reablement places and on average we received:



0.078 complaints per place



1 x stage 1 complaint for every 12.8 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 2023 and 31 March 2024 we received:



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



6 complaints by telephone



7 complaints by letter



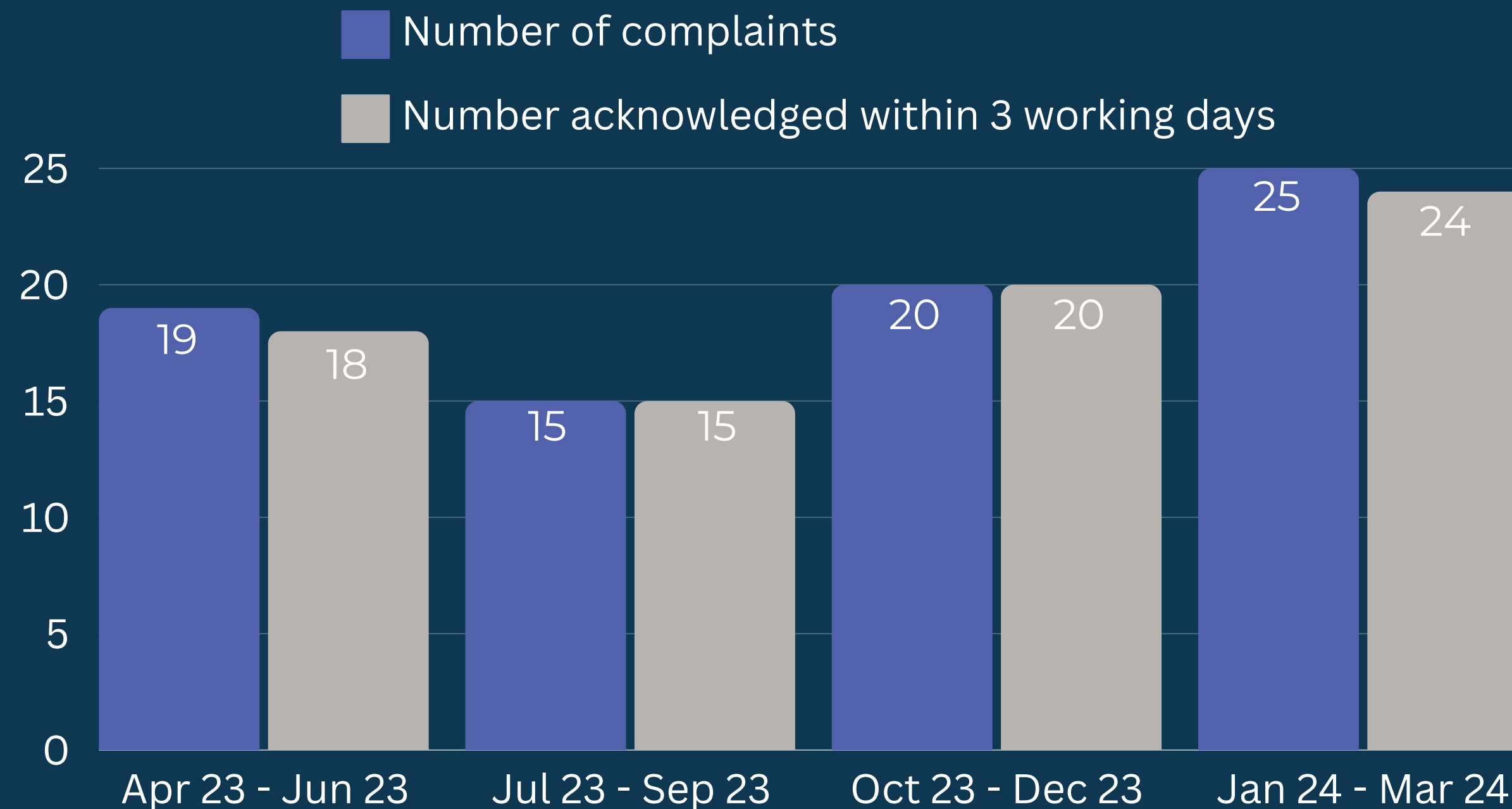
10 complaints were raised in person



0 complaints were made via social media

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.

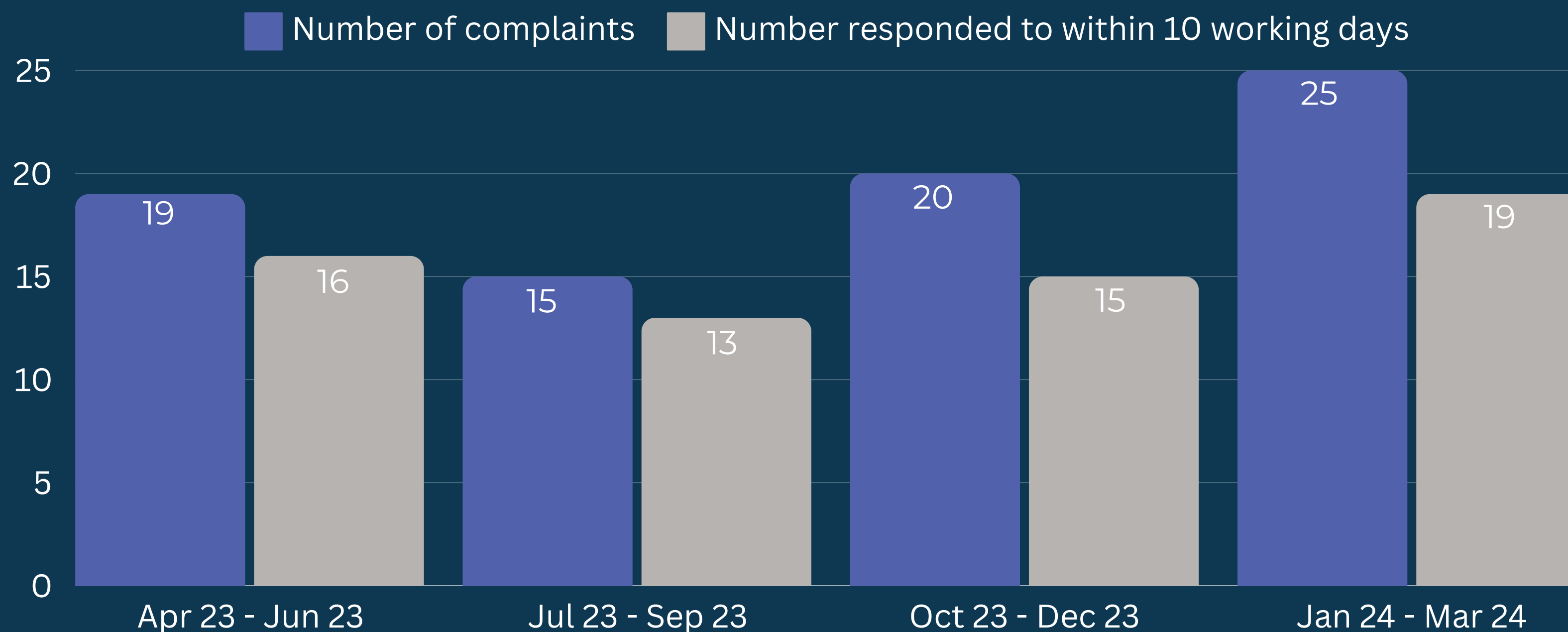
Of the 79 stage 1 complaints received, 77 (97%) were acknowledged within 3 working days.

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

- The investigating staff member for the complaint was on annual leave
- The initial complaint voicemail was redirected in error

How quickly do we resolve complaints?

Number of complaints responded to within 10 working days



Of the 79 stage 1 complaints received, 63 (80%) were 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 required more time to fully investigate
- Feedback was required from a number of individuals in order to fully investigate the complaint
- Annual leave/bank holiday required an extension to complete the complaint

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 79 stage 1 complaints received:

67

were resolved at stage 1

12

were escalated to Stage 2

2

were further escalated to the relevant Ombudsman

Housing cases

During the year, 12 complaints were escalated to stage 2:

- **11 housing complaints**
- **1 care home complaint**

Housing Stage 2 complaints included 6 complaints about utility bills, rent and service charges, 2 regarding repairs and maintenance, 1 related to the service received when facing an eviction, 1 about communications and 1 concerning the placement of air fresheners.

All Stage 2 complaints were fully investigated by an investigating officer independent of the original complaint. Outcomes from Stage 2 complaints that were upheld included a discount being applied to a utility bill as a good will gesture and a partial refund of care home fees. In both cases it was recognised that Brunelcare could have communicated more clearly with residents and their families.

During the year, 12 complaints were escalated to stage 2:

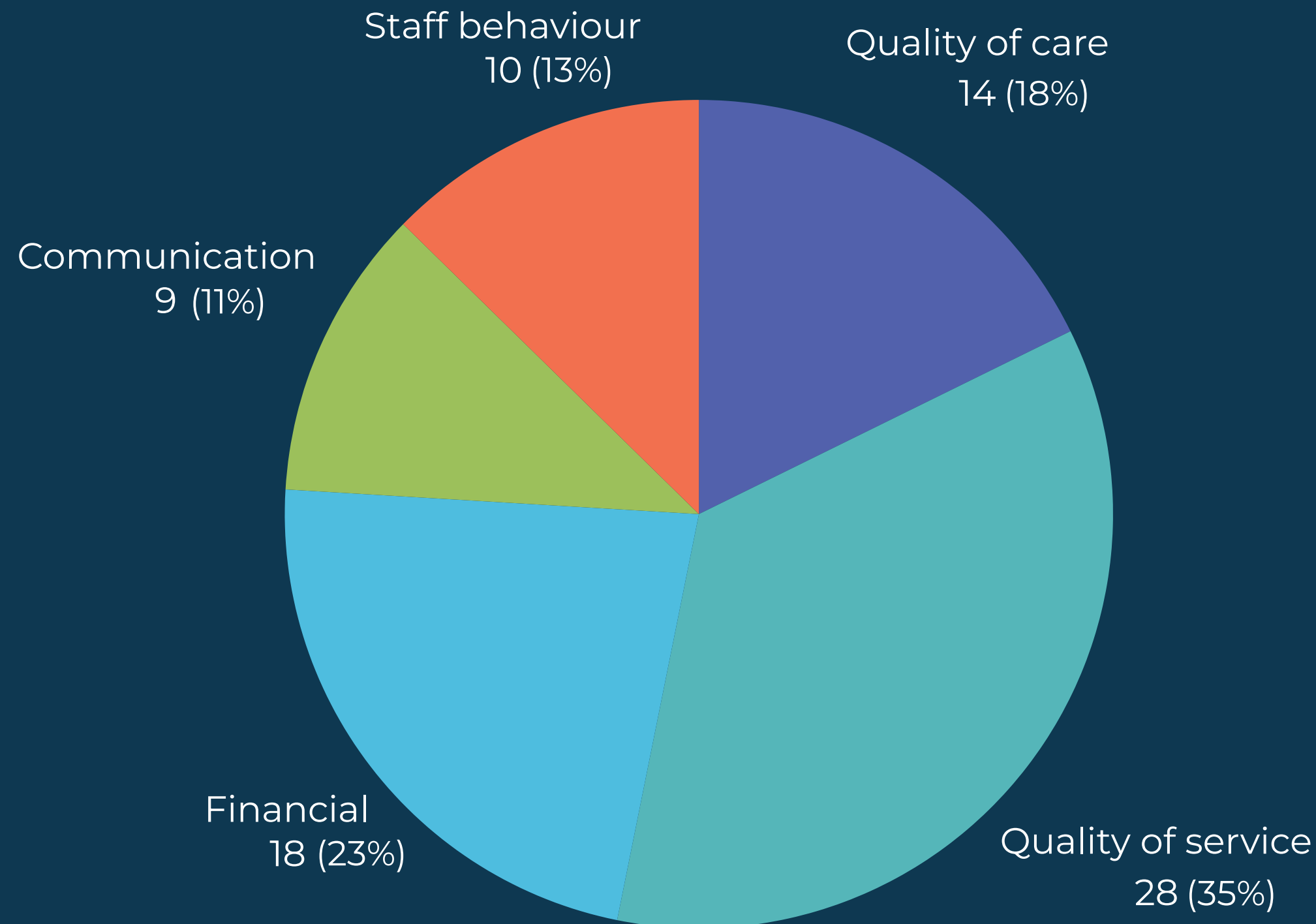
- **11 housing complaints**
- **1 care home complaint**

Care homes

The care home Stage 2 complaint concerned care fees and the legitimacy of care home bills. The initial complaint argued that on receipt of Funded Nursing Care (FNC) contributions, the Care Home's bills should have been reduced accordingly. Our investigation found that Brunelcare were following procedure to use the FNC funding for the resident's care and that there was nothing in the signed Licence to Occupy that promised otherwise.

This complaint was further escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman who decided not to investigate the complaint. The Ombudsman stated that it did not investigate because it was unlikely that an Ombudsman investigation would lead to a different outcome. The Ombudsman added that it was reasonable to expect the complainant to challenge the legal terms of the resident's signed agreement (Licence to Occupy) with Brunelcare.

Issues raised in complaints, learning and improvement



Quality of service is the largest category and covers a wide range of issues across all services including: missing items/clothing in care homes, gardening services, delays to repairs and maintenance, sub-contractors, fire alarm testing, damage caused by water leaks, heating and intercom systems not working, delays in property transfers/purchases and lack of parking at sites.

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:

Moss growth on pavements outside of some of Brunelcare's buildings was becoming a slip hazard; especially where paths were on a slope.

We:

Reviewed the accumulation of moss and asked Brunelcare's landscape service to spray the paths to remove all moss. Following this a three monthly check was set up to ensure paths were kept clear and the problem did not recur.

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

You told us:

You did not understand why your relative had a limited number of visits from Brunelcare in their home after being discharged from hospital.

We:

Reviewed our Meet and Greet pack to ensure it was clear within this that following a discharge from hospital, whether care was to be provided by Brunelcare's Reablement or Domiciliary Service. Additionally, a process was established whereby a team leader makes a home visit a month after any concern or complaint has been resolved to check that things continue to run smoothly and no further problems have been encountered.

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

You told us:

When you try to call Brunelcare the phone sometimes goes unanswered, and if you leave a voice message no-one returns your call.

We:

Explored the numbers that were being called and found that in some situations the number being called belonged to someone who no longer worked for Brunelcare. To prevent frustration we are encouraging all housing residents to call the dedicated Customer Services line where a team of people are available to take and return calls.

It has been clarified that the Customer Services Team aims to answer all calls and should a voice message be left, an answer machine message makes it clear that non-urgent calls will be responded to within 5 working days. In addition, Brunelcare's IT Services have set up a monthly check of the main Brunelcare phone number to ensure that calls received are reliably redirected.

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

You told us:

Increases in rent and utility bills were causing confusion and frustration.

We:

Sent an accompanying letter to all residents which explained the breakdown more clearly and the reasons for any increases. Alongside this, additional meetings were set up at each site to answer any questions residents had.

Case Study 1: Housing / Repairs and Maintenance

Situation

Mr A complained that a newly installed heating system was not functioning.

Outcome

This complaint was investigated by the Asset Manager. Brunelcare's heating contractors, Dimplex, were asked to review the newly installed system and identify whether this functioned correctly. It was found that the heating system functioned correctly, however clearer instructions could be produced to help residents understand the new heating system as this did not have a simple on/off switch but was controlled by a thermostat. A simple user-guide was created and residents shown how to effectively use the heating system, including through site coffee mornings. Alongside this, Brunelcare's electrician adjusted the timer to take advantage of off-peak heating. Further questions regarding the heating system were addressed at Quarterly Site Meetings and residents made aware of the steps taken.

Case study 2: Extra Care Housing

Situation

Ms B complained that the intercom system at her ECH site had not been working for 8 weeks.

Outcome

Following an investigation by the Centre Manager, it was found that at several ECH sites intercom systems needed updating, with some being older systems which meant delays whilst the sub-contractor sourced suitable parts. Safety and access issues possibly caused by malfunctioning intercom systems were recognised and sub-contractors chased regularly and reminded that this constituted an urgent repair. The repair was carried out as soon as the part was received.

Case study 3: Reablement

Situation

Ms C complained that during support received, a member of the night staff had spoken to them rudely.

Outcome

This incident was investigated by the Senior Nurse in the Reablement Centre. This revealed that the member of staff referred to was an agency worker and it was made clear that this standard of care was below that expected by Brunelcare and the carer apologised to the guest. The investigation found that during reablement care, in some cases, where carers encourage a guest to do a task for themselves as part of their reablement support programme (i.e. walking to the toilet) this can be perceived as being unhelpful; there is ongoing staff training and reminders to ensure carers are encouraging and responsive to individual needs.

Case study 4: Community Services

Situation

Mrs D complained that her carer's visits were not on time and sometimes cut short. Mrs D added that her carer was sometimes on their phone during visits.

Outcome

This complaint was investigated by the Community Services Manager through speaking to the carer and reviewing logs of carers arrival/departure times. It was found that the carer did not contact the client to let them know she was running late and the carer was reminded of the importance of timely visits with attentive care and good communication provided. The client was allocated a new carer as they had requested. In addition to this, all carers within the service were given refresher training as to the standards of care expected and the importance of timely visits.

Case study 5: Care Homes

Situation

A family member complained about standards of hygiene and their loved one's level of personal care, and felt that these standards had slipped following an earlier complaint.

Outcome

Following an investigation by the Care Home Manager, it was found that the resident lived with dementia and sometimes refused personal hygiene care. It was acknowledged that despite this there needed to be increased communication between the day and night care teams to clarify who was responsible for basic hygiene routines, especially when earlier refused, and to ensure this was updated in the Care Plan. Carers at the home were provided with refresher training on methods to encourage residents to wash whilst respecting their choice and dignity. As part of this investigation it was recognised that in care homes liaison was required to discuss expectations with family members where it may be the case that a resident will refuse personal care and work was undertaken by the Care Home Manager and Dementia Care Lead to ensure these conversations are held in a sensitive way.

Compliments received



199

compliments about the services provided by Brunelcare and its employees were received. This number is up from 49 compliments recorded centrally in 2022-23. Centralised reporting has improved in the year with support from the Complaints Officer and updated compliments logs. Celebrating success is encouraged across all sites.

Compliment examples

Reablement

“Many thanks to the caring and supportive staff at Orchard Grove Reablement Centre in Bristol. You did an amazing job of looking after my mum and helping her to gain her confidence and mobility following a long stay in hospital. All the staff were always supportive, helpful and caring.”

“During Dad's stay you all gave him a happy, secure environment and your kindness and smiles went such a long way to cheering his day. From the family, we can only sing your praises and thank you so very much for looking after our dad.”

Compliment examples

Community Services

“The Council had a meeting with all managers and gave feedback on client Mrs S and how amazing the team were who have worked with her, keeping her at home and doing her favourite hobby knitting. It’s the talk of S Glos Council.”

“I just wanted to say how amazing [staff member] is, she is always on the ball with every patient and implements any changes straight away. Her knowledge of patients shines through at every run through. I feel my patients really benefit from the Goals I set and each Goal is followed exactly by the whole of the Brunel enabler team. Their dedication to rehab is to be commended and they always go that extra mile. Thank you so much [staff member] and the whole D2A Brunel Team.”

Compliments received

Care Homes

“I’ve spent the last couple of days crying and now can’t stop smiling that you’ve given my dear mum the opportunity to live in your inspirational home. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You - and what you have created at Deerhurst - are amazing. I will never forget the kindness you have shown us.”

“Mr X received the best care possible and the staff at Little Heath were all amazing with him, thank you for looking after him in the last weeks of his life.”

**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 between April and June 2024. The outcome of this assessment has informed a full review of the Charity's Managing Comments, Concerns, Complaints and Compliments policy. Both documents are available on our website.

RAISING AWARENESS & SUPPORTING THE CUSTOMER



During 2024-25 we will continue to refine and enhance our complaints handling process. During this time we will:

- continue to review our complaints policy to ensure it meets the requirements of the new complaints handling code
- update our website, policy and template complaints letters with the new contact details of the Housing Ombudsman
- record any vulnerabilities of complainants so that we can tailor our responses to individual needs
- look at different ways to make the complaints procedure more accessible such as developing an easy-read guide
- further consult our Residents First Group regarding key areas in the Complaints Handling Code and engage with past complainants to help shape our future approach to complaints and the language we use

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 4214
-  By emailing us at 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.