

Complaints Performance and Service Improvement REPORT

2024-25

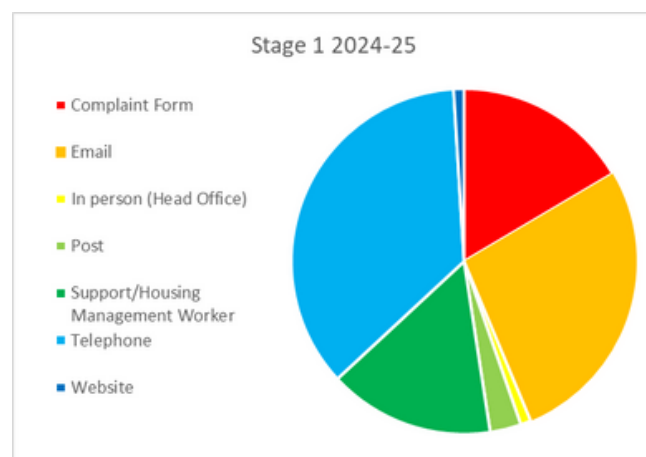
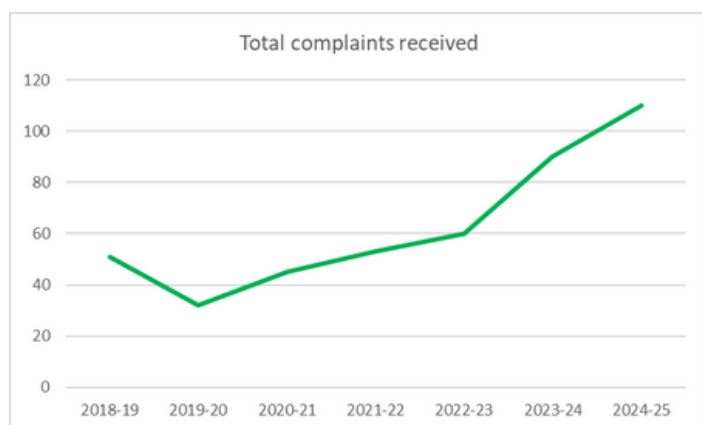
The Society of St James
125 Albert Road South
Southampton
SO14 3FR

Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report 2024-25

Over the last 12 months we've implemented an updated Complaints Policy to make it easier for people to complain. Having an effective complaints policy is essential when ensuring people have an accessible and available avenue to raise concerns and have their voice heard.

Our staff have received training on how to log a complaint and what to do when dealing with complaints that have been allocated to them to investigate. Training opportunities are ongoing and the Complaints Officer is available should staff need any guidance. We will continue to ensure we have an effective complaints process and that this is embedded within all our services.

Complaints Received



This year we received a total of 110 complaints (103 stage 1, 6 stage 2). This is an increase of 20 on the previous year. We have worked hard over the last year to increase the accessibility and awareness of the complaints process within our services. This has included introducing "How to make a complaint" posters at our sites and ensuring welcome packs also contain details on how to make a complaint. The increase in complaints received this year is consistent with the improved accessibility of our complaints process.

We recognise that making a complaint can be a daunting process. We're keen to ensure that service users are supported throughout and we have included a "Frequently Asked Questions" section to the "Helping you make a complaint" flyer. This reminds people that they can have a representative accompany them or deal with the complaint on their behalf.

We have also amended our letters and literature to ask complainants to let us know if there are any reasonable adjustments we can make during the complaints process. We recognise that some of our service users will find technology challenging and prefer to communicate verbally. Whilst we will continue to promote a range of ways to raise a complaint, we will always be happy to take complaints verbally if that's what the complainant would like.

Stage 1 Complaints

Telephone - 36%

Email - 27%

Complaint form - 17%

Support/Housing Management Worker - 16%

Post - 3%

In person (Head Office) - 1%

Website - 1%



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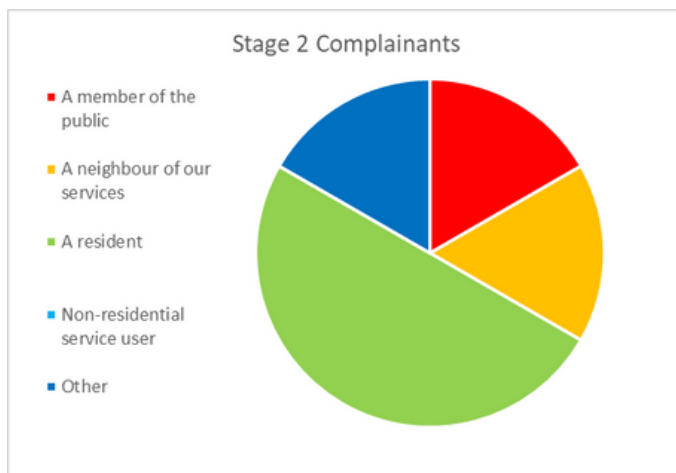
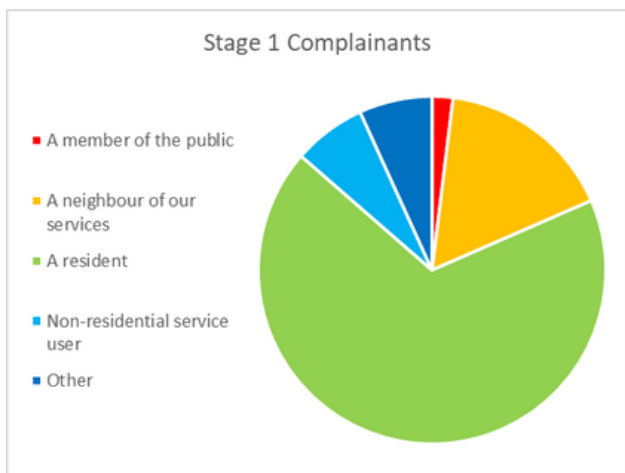


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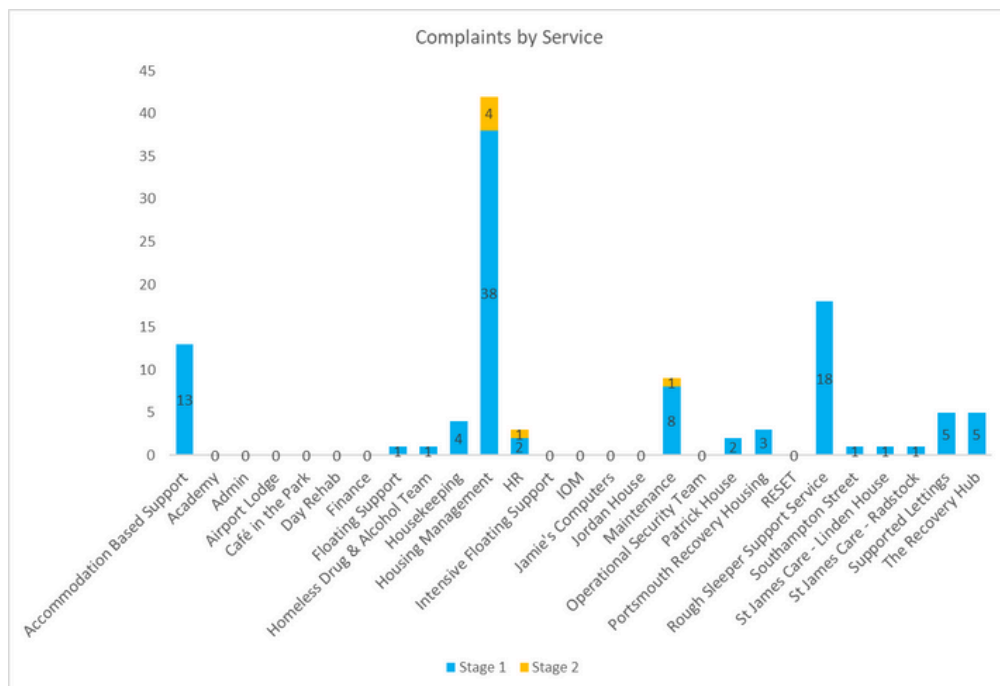
Complainants



The vast majority of complaints were received from residents. At stage 1 this was 68% and at stage 2 this was 50%. 17% of both stage one and stage 2 complaints were made by neighbours of our services. We strive to maintain good relations with our neighbours and will be implementing "contact cards" to improve the ease by which they can contact us, particularly out of hours when a quick response is beneficial.

Of the 103 stage 1 complaints received, only one of these was not accepted. In this instance the reasons why the complaint was not being accepted was made clear to the complainant and was in line with our policy. All complaints at stage 2 were accepted.

Complaint Types



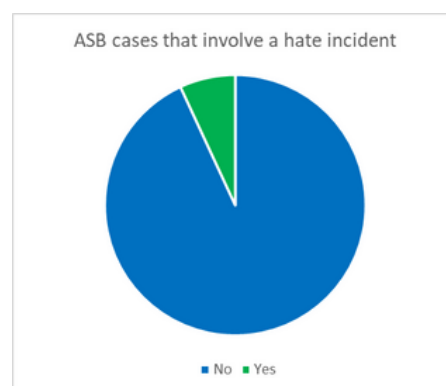
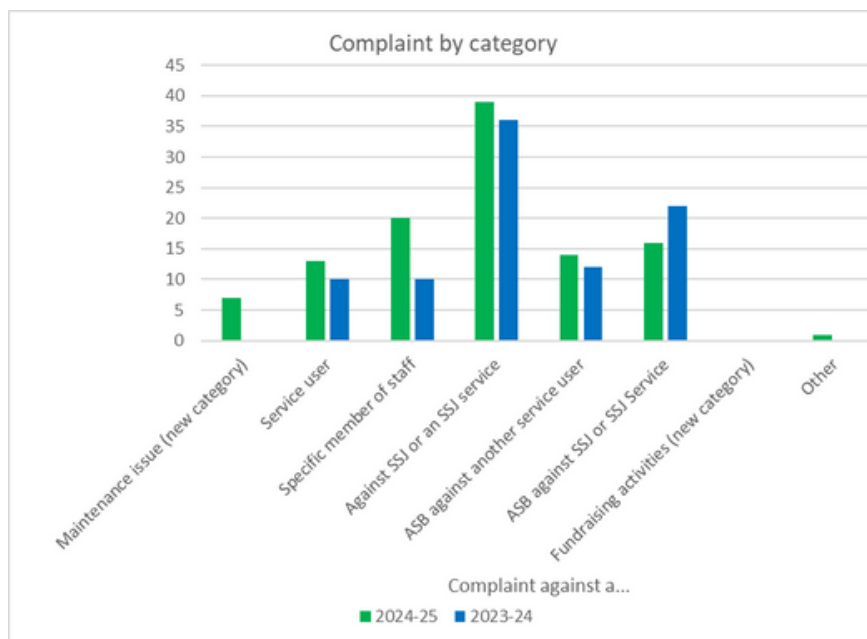
The data shows a number of our services have received no complaints, whereas others have received a significant proportion. Housing Management has received the highest number of complaints (37%).

For our residential services, complaints literature is readily available and we're encouraged that residents are using the complaints process.

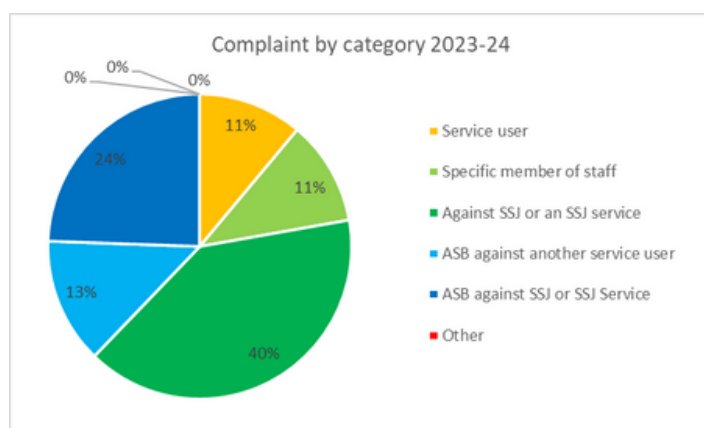
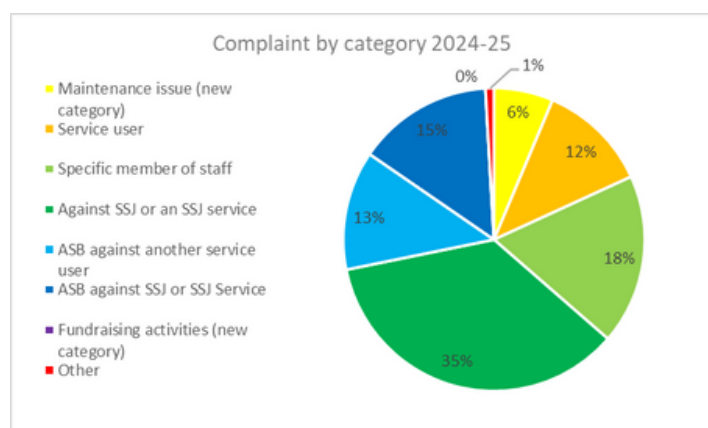
For services that received no complaints, we will ensure that there is a visible complaints process available to all.

We will also continue to work with staff in our services to ensure they are confident in recognising when someone is dissatisfied and asking if they would like to make a complaint.

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27% of complaints received relate to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Of these ASB complaints, 7% involved a hate incident.



This year we have added separate categories for maintenance issues and fundraising activities. We have seen 6% of complaints this year relate to maintenance issues. No complaints have been made in respect of our fundraising activities.

When looking at the data and comparing it to the previous year, we can see that the number of complaints against a specific member of staff has increased by 7%. Of these complaints against staff, 55% were not upheld, 20% were partially upheld, 10% were upheld, 10% were withdrawn and 5% were passed to an external organisation.

Complaints of ASB against another service user and complaints (without ASB) against a service user have remained consistent to levels seen in 2023-24.

Complaints of both ASB against SSJ or SSJ Service and (non-ASB) complaints against SSJ or SSJ service have decreased on the previous year.

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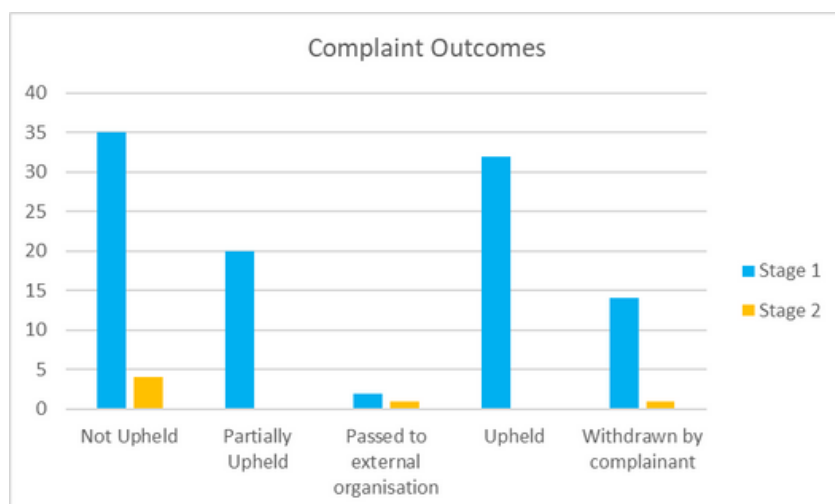
Complaint Outcomes

Stage 1

Not upheld - 34%
Partially upheld - 19%
Passed to external organisation - 2%
Upheld - 31%
Withdrawn - 14%

Stage 2

Not upheld - 66%
Partially upheld - 0%
Passed to external organisation - 17%
Upheld - 0%
Withdrawn - 17%



Complaint Timescales

- On average, stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within 1 day of receipt and stage 2 complaints within 2 days.
- In 6 cases the stage 1 acknowledgements took over 5 days, however all but one of these was before the new complaints process was operating. The delays were due to staff lapses and shortages and since then there has been a change in staffing and training to emphasise the importance of the new process.
- The average time to conclude a stage 1 complaint was 12 days. For stage 2 complaints this was 44 days.
- 79% of stage 1 complaints were handled within 10 working days.
- 60% of stage 2 complaints were handled within 20 working days.
- Stage 1 complaints ranged in duration from 0 days to 91 days.
- Stage 2 complaints ranged in duration from 5 days to 121 days.

On reviewing the complaints that exceeded the 10 working day timescale, it can be seen that the longest stage 1 complaint duration related to a complex matter that fed into an internal investigation. The complainant was kept updated throughout but we acknowledge that it would have been preferable to conclude this matter sooner than was the case.

For other complaints with long durations, there are a variety of reasons. In some instances contact with the complainant was challenging/unsuccessful which caused a delay. In other cases a lack of clear communication between staff meant things weren't dealt with as swiftly as they should have been. Additionally, operational pressures will sometimes necessitate other tasks taking precedence, particularly when they relate to service user safety. As a result we confirm via email when Investigators are appointed a complaint, and check in regularly to ensure it's being handled correctly.

We aim to meet the Ombudsman's timescales in all cases and acknowledge this is an area where we need to continue to improve. Staff training will continue and the importance of meeting deadlines is a key element of this training. Additionally, the Complaints Officer and Admin team will continue to monitor progress of live complaints and escalate cases where appropriate.

Housing Ombudsman

SSJ has no findings of non-compliance with the Complaints Handling Code by the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has not published any reports in relation to the work of SSJ.

We have completed the self-assessment form and it is considered we remain compliant with all elements of the Code.

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Learnings

Complaints are a valuable source of information and insight and we will continue to use them as a tool for improvement and learning. On review of the data we can see that ASB continues to be a significant proportion of our complaints. We will be rolling out a "contact card" which gives both residents and neighbours an easy list of contact methods in the event of ASB. This will include contact details of our Operational Security Team who will be well placed to respond promptly.

We will continue to publicise the variety of methods that complaints can be made, particularly focusing on the under utilised routes (i.e. our website).

To ensure we are accurately capturing all complaints, we will be ensuring that for the services where no complaints were received, there are visible posters and staff have a sound understanding of complaints training.

Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

These comments have regard to section 9 in particular of the Complaint Handling Code 2024, Scrutiny & Oversight. I have accordingly had regard to the need to identify any potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision in accordance with paragraph 9.4 of the Code. I have also had regard to the Self-Assessment Form 2025 to scrutinise how far SSJ complies with the Code in policy and in practice.

I have discussed this Report with the manager responsible for its compilation and tested and sought clarification of some of the items, having regard to the requirements of the Code. As a result of those discussions, I am satisfied that there is compliance with the Code in Policy terms. That is clear from the Self-Assessment Form and cross-checking this with the Complaints and Compliments Policy (September 2024).

It is clear from the Report (under 'Complaints Received') that there has been an increase of about 22% of complaints from the previous year. I have satisfied myself that this does not appear to evidence any decrease in the quality of, or systemic issue in, the services being provided by the Society. As set out in the Report the increase in complaints received does appear to reflect the improved accessibility of the complaints process which is detailed in the Report. Therefore, having regard to paragraph 3.3 of the Code, there seems no reason to see this increase in the number of complaints as a negative.

The Report helpfully in my view breaks down and analyses the number of complainants by the service complained about and by category, as well as the mode for used for making the complaints (under 'Complaints Received'). This will assist in taking lessons from the complaints, especially where upheld (31% at Stage 1), and putting that learning into practice.

The relatively high number of complaints with respect to Housing Management in particular and also the Rough Sleeper Support Service are not surprising given the nature of those services. At the same time, it is noted (under 'Complaint Types') that some services received no complaints. To ensure that this is not an indication that residents are unable to complain about those services, further steps are to be taken to ensure that there is a visible complaints process available to all, as the Report records.

I note that only a small proportion of the complaints (6 of the 103 Stage 1 Complaints) proceeded to Stage 2, none of which were upheld.

One area requiring consideration, however, arises regarding the Complaints Timescales. Given the pressures on the staff, it is in my view encouraging that nearly 80% of the Stage 1 Complaints have been dealt with within 10 working days as required by the Code. However, over 20% were outside of that period and the Report acknowledges that this is an area in which the Society needs to improve. It is intended that information, including in particular that relating to the timescales of the dealing with complaints, will be provided every 3 months allowing the monitoring of and the taking of any necessary actions to increase compliance with the timescales in the Code.