



Abri

Creating communities,
empowering lives

2023 – 2024

Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report



Abri's 2023 – 2024 complaints performance and service improvement

Under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, Abri is required to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This report includes Abri's annual self-assessment against this Code and a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance. It also includes a summary of the types of complaints Abri have refused to accept; any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; and any other relevant reports.

Introduction

Complaints learning is at the heart of our culture and although performance has improved since the winter of 2022, we know that we must retain our ongoing focus.

We welcome all kinds of feedback and have revised our systems to make sure it's easy for customers to make complaints through a variety of methods. Feedback around our complaints service is collected in real-time via transactional surveys.

Our repairs metrics and transactional customer satisfaction surveys in 2023/24 have shown a continuing improvement trend and learning from our complaints process and customer feedback has been central to our performance.

Our repairs service, which has been a key driver of complaints, has also seen performance improve and ended the year significantly ahead of the same point in 2023, and the best in the last three years.

Furthermore, transactional satisfaction for the responsive repairs service in 2023/24 was 92%. And overall, we're pleased to see that the volume of stage one complaints has reduced from 2022/23 with Q4 2023/24 seeing 636 fewer complaints than the same period the previous year. We also ended March with 26% fewer open stage one complaints than the same period in 2023.

In summary, the learning journey we've been on this year has helped us to finish in a much stronger position than we started. There is still more to do, but with tenant satisfaction measures, transactional and complaints survey satisfaction all improving we are on the right path. Looking ahead to 2024/25, we will stay focussed on improving our complaints experience and customer satisfaction further.

To find out more about our performance this year, please take a look at [Abri's 2023-2024 Customer Annual Report](#).

Ralph Facey
Executive Director of Operations

Annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

Abri's annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code can be found [here](#).

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of Abri's complaint handling performance

- 2,754 complaints received at stage one
- 753 complaints received at stage two
 - On average, Abri received 6 formal stage one complaints per 1,000 homes, per month (residents only)

Complaint handling timescales

- % of complaints handled within timescales (standard)
 - Stage one – 22.69%
 - Stage two – 13.35%
- % of complaints handled within timescales (extended)
 - Stage one – 34.78%
 - Stage two – 20.83%
- % resolved in standard + extended:
 - Stage one – 57.47%
 - Stage two – 34.18%

Escalation to stage two

- 3,019 complaints were closed in year at stage one
- 753 complaints were escalated in year to stage two
- Escalation rate from stage one to stage two was 25%

Redress

- Across 3,768 complaints, we offered an average of £132.43 in redress

Complaint outcomes

Stage one

- 76.42% of complaints upheld (3,019 closed, 2,307 upheld)

Stage two

- 74.23% of complaints upheld (749 closed, 556 upheld)

Complaint satisfaction

- Satisfaction with complaints handling – 56.20%

Performance across the year

During this financial year, Abri saw complaints volumes at stage one stabilise and ended the year with the fewest open stage one complaints across the year as a whole. The table below outlines complaints numbers received month by month over the year:

	Stage one	Stage two	Housing Ombudsman investigation requests
Apr 23	199	61	0
May 23	230	53	2
Jun 23	260	56	0
Jul 23	234	41	1
Aug 23	227	75	0
Sept 23	225	74	0
Oct 23	271	74	1
Nov 23	242	65	4
Dec 23	175	52	5
Jan 24	301	58	6
Feb 24	198	66	4
Mar 24	192	78	4

Refused to accept reasons

In line with Abri's policy, which can be found on its [website](#), the only complaints Abri would refuse to accept are:

- If the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago. However, Abri will apply discretion and may accept complaints made outside of 12 months where there is a good reason to do so.
- Where matters have already been the subject of legal proceedings which have come to an end after a final hearing.
- Where in all cases, except complaints about housing conditions, legal proceedings have started or are threatened (that is a letter of claim or equivalent has been sent to us).
- Where complaints relate to consumer credit regulated activity, which may be able to be referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service.
- If a complaint is being made unreasonably or the customer is demonstrating unacceptable behaviour when pursuing their complaint, although Abri will still consider the individual circumstances of the complaint.

If Abri has valid reasons to deal with a complaint differently, or to not accept it at all, it will be able to evidence why this is the case and explain this reasoning to the customer. It will advise how it plans to deal with the matter or will explain why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. Abri will also explain the customer's right to escalate the complaint, including to the Ombudsman Service.

Findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman

Abri has no findings of non-compliance with the Complaints Handling Code by the Housing Ombudsman.

Service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints

Abri strives to provide a fair and effective resolution to any complaint and uses its learnings to improve how it works. Abri's complaints and compliments are themed, so it can easily identify areas it's excelling in or areas that need further work.

Top three compliment topics this year:

1. Standard of works completed
2. Customer service – help and support available
3. Customers sharing their thanks

Top three complaint topics this year:

1. Time to complete work
2. Wrongly advised appointments
3. Unconfirmed appointments

Getting it right first time

Abri understands that its repairs performance in 2022/23 was not where it needed to be, so it focussed on getting it right first time and improving its systems and scheduling, and also introduced a new Rant & Rave survey solution to provide teams with real-time feedback from customers to help them improve services.

Appointment booking process

Abri is improving its appointment booking process to make sure every appointment is booked in right first time. This year, it introduced a new 'no access' process which includes appointment reminders 48 hours before and lets customers know via text when Abri has not been able to gain access to their property (e.g. if they're not home).

Stock availability

Abri recognised some areas in its geography where its stock has been harder for operatives to get to. This can reduce the operative's ability to carry out repairs promptly. In Chard, Abri has given operatives access to a container of stock so that they can quickly access the items and tools they need close to where they're working.

Grounds maintenance

In Spring 2023, Abri noticed a spike in complaints related to its grounds maintenance service, with customers reporting that they were confused about Abri's responsibilities. As well as responding to individual complaints, Abri used this as an opportunity to launch its new Neighbourhood Policy and Procedure, which included an [Estate Standard document](#). The simple guide sets out how Abri is looking after the physical environment and helps customers identify the different levels of service Abri delivers.

Resident Scrutiny Group's review into complaints

This year the Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG) completed their complaints review, which they began in 2022/2023. They carried out desktop research: reviewing policies and procedures, regulatory codes, our complaints data, and examples of previous communication with customers. They also met with some of the Customer Relations team.

The review found that although Abri's overall approach to customer complaints was good, this wasn't always evidenced in its performance and customer satisfaction levels. Abri has taken on board the recommendations and made some improvements:

- **Empowering every Abri colleague to take ownership of a complaint.** Abri has created an internal web page dedicated to complaint handling with useful tools to empower all colleagues to take ownership of issues raised in complaints.
- **Abri is following customer preferences.** The review found it was important for customers to be updated about their complaints in a way that works for them. Abri has provided clearer guidance around this and added it to its quality-checking list.

Spotlight Reports

When the Housing Ombudsman produced Spotlight Reports, Abri responded by creating action plans against the recommendations with owners assigned to ensure it has a plan in place to implement improvements.

Damp and mould

When the Damp and Mould Spotlight report was published in 2021, Abri produced a comprehensive action plan to ensure it put in place all the recommendations, should they not already be part of its process. During the last financial year, Abri made further improvements to its damp and mould processes, using learnings from both the Spotlight Report and customer complaints.

An external audit in December 2023 awarded a rating of 'Significant Assurance', and through Abri's proactive approach, it has seen a reduction in damp and mould related stage one and stage two complaints.

Further improvements made over the last year include:

- Introducing a dedicated damp, mould and disrepair team led by a specialist senior manager. The team have a yearly budget of £2 million.
- A team of surveyors to carry out inspections and surveys for more complex cases, as well as specialist Advanced Multi-Skilled operatives to carry out work.
- Mould removal/washes have been brought in-house, so Abri has better control over response times and quality. This reduces the need for extra visits, as they also complete a visual assessment for ventilation whilst at the property so that follow-on work can be raised accordingly.
- Abri has recruited ventilation installers in-house, preventing the need to outsource this work.

Noise complaints – time to be heard

Abri produced an action plan for the Spotlight Report on Noise Complaints and some of the key improvements implemented are:

- Checklists developed for Customer Contact colleagues to follow. This provides a standard approach to handling these conversations and increases the opportunities for good customer outcomes.
- Abri adjusted its standard for empty homes, so any property above the ground floor will be supplied with an anti-vibration mat for use under washing machines.
- Abri produced an initial noise pack to be sent to customers reporting noise before a case is logged so it can determine if the noise needs to be logged as an anti-social behaviour case or not, which will help Abri to understand and explain the next steps to customers.
- A working group is in place to explore and develop further improvements.

Knowledge and Information and Relationship of Equals

Action plans are in progress for the more recent Knowledge & Information Management Spotlight Report and the Relationship of Equals Spotlight Report to ensure Abri are taking on board all the recommendations made.

Annual reports about Abri's performance from the Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman has not produced any annual reports about Abri's performance.

Abri's Ombudsman investigations and outcomes 2023/24				
Month	Investigations received back from HOS	Determinations	Outcomes	CHFOs
Apr 23	3	6	2 maladministration 2 service failures 1 sufficiently redressed 1 not within jurisdiction	0
May 23	5	10	1 severe maladministration 2 maladministration 3 service failures 2 no maladministration 2 sufficiently redressed	0
Jun 23	2	3	1 maladministration 1 service failure 1 not within jurisdiction	0
Jul 23	3	8	2 maladministration 1 service failure 5 no maladministration	0
Aug 23	3	8	1 maladministration 5 no maladministration 1 sufficiently redressed 1 alternative resolution	0
Sept 23	1	1	1 service failure	0
Oct 23	1	2	1 service failure 1 no maladministration	0
Nov 23	1	1	1 not within jurisdiction	0
Dec 23	2	3	2 sufficiently redressed 1 not within jurisdiction	0
Jan 24	2	4	1 service failure 3 sufficiently redressed	0
Feb 24	0	0	N/A	0
Mar 24	4	11	1 not within jurisdiction 3 maladministration 5 service failures 2 sufficiently redressed	0
Total	27	57		0

Other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to Abri

Abri is committed to working with the Ombudsman to ensure any requests for information and determination orders, and recommendations are acted upon promptly. Below is a summary from 2023/24 of the published investigations Abri has received back from the Housing Ombudsman, along with the outcome types. Abri did not receive any complaints handling failure orders in 2023/24.

The below publications can be found on the Housing Ombudsman's website:

[Ombudsman orders over £9,000 compensation after Abri left residents in damp and disrepair for years - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

[CASE_202107780_Abri.pdf \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 25 May 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202119402\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 27 April 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202127784\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) - 29 August 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202214884\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)- 2 August 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202204958\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 31 May 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202218106\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 4 September 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202117971\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 19 July 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202205248\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 28 June 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202120406\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 31 August 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202216490\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – 5 April 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202107780\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)- 25 May 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202201662\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)- 23 May 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202221296\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)- 15 May 2023

[Abri Group Limited \(202117957\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)- 30 May 2023