

silva

PART OF THE ABRI GROUP

2023 – 2024

Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report



Silva Homes' 2023 – 2024 complaints performance and service improvement

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, Silva Homes is required to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This report includes Silva Homes' 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 Silva Homes 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

As we reflect on the past year, we recognise the crucial role that customer feedback plays in our drive for continuous improvement. In 2022/23, we faced a significant backlog of repairs, particularly with roofing, which we acknowledge led to an increased volume of complaints into 2023/24. Despite these challenges, we've stayed focused and worked hard to resolve customer's complaints promptly.

The lessons learned from these complaints have been instrumental in improving critical areas of our organisation, especially our repairs service. Recognising our shortcomings, we have implemented several changes: we have improved how we capture repairs, updated our follow-on procedures, and increased team resources.

I'm pleased that these efforts have had a positive impact, reflected in a satisfaction score of 85.6% in our Repairs transactional surveys by the end of 2023/24.

Additionally, we have bolstered resources within our dedicated resolution team, enabling more efficient responses to our complaints.

We know that there are areas in our complaint handling and investigation processes that can be improved, and we remain committed to ongoing reviews and self-assessment. This will ensure we deliver the best possible service to our customers. The positive direction of our complaint-handling efforts reassures us that we are making significant progress.

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

Dasos Christou,
Regional Managing Direct (south east)

Annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

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

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of Silva Homes' complaint handling performance

- 267 complaints received at stage one
- 48 complaints received at stage two

Complaint handling timescales

- % of complaints handled within timescales
 - Stage one – 97.38%
 - Stage two – 100%

Escalation to stage two

- 258 complaints were closed in year at stage one
- 48 complaints were escalated in year to stage two
- Escalation rate from stage one to stage two was 18.6%

Complaint satisfaction

- Satisfaction with complaints handling – 40%

Performance across the year

During this financial year, Silva Homes received a regular volume of complaints. Towards the end of the year, it observed an increase, particularly in stage two complaints. The table below outlines complaints numbers received month by month over the year:

	Stage one	Stage two	Housing Ombudsman investigation requests
Apr 23	25	2	0
May 23	17	3	1
Jun 23	26	3	0
Jul 23	15	3	1
Aug 23	12	2	0
Sept 23	21	3	0
Oct 23	24	11	1
Nov 23	25	1	0
Dec 23	21	3	0
Jan 24	23	3	0
Feb 24	25	3	0
Mar 24	33	11	0

Refused to accept reasons

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

- Initial requests for a service, for example, a repair or an improvement to address a hazard.
- Complaints of anti-social behaviour, as these are covered under the [anti-social behaviour policy](#). A complaint will be accepted if the customer is dissatisfied with how their case was handled.
- Subject access requests for information, as this is covered under the data protection policy.
- Dissatisfaction with the timescales of a service delivery if it is within Silva Homes' service standards (e.g. the length of time to carry out a routine repair).
- Grievances arising from any court action served by Silva Homes, as a result of a breach of tenancy.
- Cases where a legal claim is made against Silva Homes, including insurance claims but excluding disrepair/housing conditions claims. Legal claims for housing conditions/disrepair may be stopped or prevented until the complaints process is completed. Silva Homes normally expect customers to engage with it personally in investigating the any dissatisfaction with our services, or any complaint, rather than going through lawyers, unless their involvement is justified (see below).
- Complaints which are over 12 months old, unless a good reason can be shown (for example,

the initial complaint was not recorded when it should have been, or a customer has been unable to make the complaint earlier for good reason, for instance they are vulnerable, or have been bereaved etc).

- Also, where the problem is a recurring issue or continues because it has not been fixed by Silva Homes, it may consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this helps it to resolve the issue.
- Silva Homes may consider complaints and offer redress for housing conditions/disrepair as far as the legal limitation period (i.e. six years back from the date of the complaint).
- Dissatisfaction related to a previous issue which has already been through the complaints process fully and a conclusion has been reached.

If Silva Homes 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. Silva Homes 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

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

Service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints

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

Top three compliment topics this year:

1. Kindness, consideration and politeness of our Repairs team when visiting customers (Gas & Plumbing highest compliments, followed by Carpentry)
2. Colleagues within our Rents team going the extra mile to support customers
3. Contact Hub are great at listening and help to resolve customer's queries

Top three complaint topics this year:

1. Damp and Mould
2. Time taken to resolve/respond
3. Carpentry repairs (fencing, roof leaks, guttering)

Roofing repairs

As one of the top three reasons for complaints, roofing repairs highlighted an area for improvement. By working with a new contractor, Silva Homes has significantly reduced its backlog, reducing the length of time customer waited for their repairs to be resolved. For our existing contractor, Silva Homes has scheduled regular contractor meetings and implemented solutions to track the progress of repairs, ensuring that complaint cases are promptly identified and resolved efficiently.

Early identification of repairs

Following complaints in relation to multiple visits and delays in resolving issues with extractor fans with customers' homes. Silva's operatives have been equipped with anemometers to assess the efficiency of these fans. This aims to help Silva Homes establish whether an overhaul or replacement is needed as early as possible. This has resulted in more efficient repairs.

Estate Services

Having received complaints concerning the clarity of its cleaning services, Silva Homes has revised its cleaning schedules in locations where customers were uncertain about the service provided, to help ensure consistency of service. It has also introduced a [Service Standards Handbook](#), this easy read guide sets out the service Silva Homes delivers.

Spotlight Reports

When the Housing Ombudsman has produced Spotlight Reports, Silva Homes has created 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, Silva Homes produced a comprehensive action plan to ensure it put in place all the recommendations, should they not already be part of its process. There have been further improvements since Silva Homes' partnership with Abri (October 2023) as it works to align its operational approach. By October 2024, all systems and processes will be fully integrated.

Further improvements made over the last year include:

- The Abri approach (which Silva Homes has adopted) to damp and mould was recently the focus of an external audit. The outcome of this audit was a rating of “Significant Assurance” with no findings, the highest possible which reflected the sector-leading nature of the approach.
- Silva Homes’ approach to damp and mould is now driven by a prioritisation system, that assess the risk of each case as soon as it is reported. Cases are assigned a high, medium or low risk status which informs the speed with which the works are undertaken.
- The triage process for frontline colleagues has been adapted to ensure enough information is collected so that accurate and effective prioritisation of the case’s severity can take place. The process also takes into account customer vulnerabilities, including health conditions which may increase the risks associated with exposure to mould.
- Introducing a dedicated Damp and Mould co-ordinator
- Internal damp and mould related training has been developed for colleagues and includes eLearning modules that are mandatory for all frontline colleagues.
- Silva Homes understand that some customers face affordability challenges which may impact their ability to effectively use their space heating: an important factor in mitigating the likelihood of damp and mould occurring. It has provided further support for such customers through increasing the money available in its hardship fund, and is promoting its availability.

Noise complaints – time to be heard

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

- Purchase of noise monitoring equipment to help Silva Homes better determine the category of noise that is occurring which helps to shape the level of its response. This has been especially helpful in remedying some long standing cases.
- Front line customer relations partners (tenancy), responsible for anti-social behaviour, have undertaken a customer service excellence training and coaching programme.
- Silva Homes have increased the number of customer relations partners (tenancy) to reduce patch size and free up capacity to work on complex cases. This also allows colleagues to be more visible on estates, especially those with a higher incidence of noise complaints.
- Silva Homes have strengthened its relationship with the local authority environmental health team to help it define statutory noise nuisance.
- 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 latest Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report to ensure Silva Homes are taking on board all the recommendations made.

Annual reports about Silva Homes’ performance from the Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman has not produced any annual reports about Silva Homes’ performance.

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

Silva Homes 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 investigations Silva Homes has received back from the Housing Ombudsman, along with the outcome types.

Silva Homes did not receive any complaints handling failures orders in 2023/24.

Month	Investigations received back from HOS	Determinations	Outcomes	CHFOs
April	0	0		0
May	0	0		0
June	1	3	1 severe maladministration 2 maladministration	0
July	1	1	1 maladministration	0
August	0	0		0
September	0	0		0
October	0	0		0
November	2	3	1 maladministration 1 service failure 1 no maladministration	0
December	0	0		0
January	0	0		0
February	2	3	3 maladministration	0
March	0	0		0
Total	6	10		0

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

[Silva Homes Limited \(202124594\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – June 2023

[Silva Homes Limited \(202213671\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – July 2023

[Silva Homes Limited \(202224990\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – Nov 2023

[Silva Homes Limited \(202205197\) - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#) – Nov 2023