

# Agenda

## Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Thursday 7 March 2024**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

**For further information** please contact:

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## **Committee Membership**

Councillor Lizzy Diggins (Chair)

Councillor Shaista Aziz

Councillor Mary Clarkson

Councillor Paula Dunne

Councillor Rosie Rawle

Councillor Jo Sandelson

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

# Agenda

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<b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>3 Chair's Announcements</b>	
<b>4 Notes of the previous meeting</b> <p>The Panel is asked to <b>agree</b> the notes of the meeting held on 05 December 2023 as a true and accurate record.</p>	9 - 14
<b>5 Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan</b> <p>The Panel is asked to consider the Work Plan and agree any amendments.</p>	15 - 16
<b>6 Report back on recommendations</b> <p>At its meeting on 13 December 2023, Cabinet considered the following reports from the Housing and Homelessness Panel and made responses to the recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Sanctuary Accreditation</li></ul> <p>Cabinet's responses to recommendations were presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 January 2024 for noting.</p> <p>The Panel is asked to <b>note</b> Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.</p>	17 - 20
<b>7 Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2024/25</b> <p>Cabinet, at its meeting on 13 March 2024, will consider a report from the Executive Director (Communities and People) seeking approval of the Preventing Homelessness Budget allocations for 2024/25 and the grant of a lease of the Floyds Row premises. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager, and Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager have been invited to</p>	21 - 36

present the report and answer questions. The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

## **8 Implementation of Selective Licensing**

37 - 48

The Head of Planning & Regulatory Services has submitted a report to update the Panel on the year 1 actions of the Selective Licensing scheme. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Gail Siddall, Regulatory Services Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions. The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

## **9 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment**

49 - 90

The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report to update the Panel on the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions. The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

## **10 Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey 2023**

91 - 136

The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report on the Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey 2023. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.

The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

## **11 Dates of future meetings**

The Panel is asked to note the dates and times of future meetings of the Housing and Homelessness Panel:

- 03 July 2024, 6pm
- 07 August 2024, 6pm
- 10 October 2024, 6pm
- 07 November 2024, 6pm
- 06 March 2025, 6pm

*Meetings will take place remotely via Zoom.*



## **Information for those attending**

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The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

### **Councillors declaring interests**

#### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

#### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your\* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

#### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

#### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

#### **Members Code – Other Registrable Interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing\*\* of one of your Other Registrable Interests\*\*\* then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members Code – Non Registrable Interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

\*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member’s spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

\*\* Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person’s quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

\*\*\* Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Tuesday 5 December 2023**



### **Committee members present:**

Councillor Diggins (Chair)

Councillor Aziz

Councillor Clarkson

Councillor Dunne

Councillor Rawle

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

Amie Rickatson, Strategy & Service Development Manager

Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager

Steve Stansfield, Building Compliance and Safety Manager

Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer

### **Also present:**

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing

### **Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Sandelson sent apologies.

## **27. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **28. Chair's Announcements**

None.

## **29. Notes of the previous meeting**

The Panel agreed the notes of the meeting held on 05 October 2023 as a true and accurate record.

### **30. Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan**

The Panel considered the Work Plan. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Work Plan had been updated since the previous meeting; the 'Housing Associations' Approach to Tenant Engagement' item agreed by the Panel at its previous meeting was the only item which had not yet been scheduled in. The Scrutiny Officer would work with officers in Housing Services to plan this in and keep the Panel informed.

The Panel **agreed** the Work Plan as set out in the agenda pack.

*The Panel agreed to consider agenda item 7 (Building Safety & Compliance Within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock) next, followed by agenda item 6 (Housing Performance Monitoring) and then return to the agenda as listed.*

### **31. Building Safety & Compliance Within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock**

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, which provided an update on current Building Safety and Compliance performance relating to the Council's Housing Stock. The Panel was informed that this was an area of responsibility that the Council took extremely seriously and would not compromise on; it was a priority area for the Council.

Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager gave an overview of the contents of the report, highlighting that it focused on the Council's responsibility as a landlord for ensuring compliance with statutory requirements. The report included a brief outline of some of the key legislative requirements. Monthly compliance reporting was better than it had ever been and the Council was taking a proactive approach in terms of resolving issues such as damp and mould. There was always room for improvement and further investment, specifically in relation to changes in legislation, but the Property Services Manager reported that compliance was in a positive place.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- The Council was encouraging tenants to raise issues through the use of newsletters, tenant communications and reactive repairs; there were aims to go further towards encouraging tenants to report issues through a communications campaign in Winter 2024.
- Initial response times when tenants had raised issues around damp and mould had been challenging, but the Council was working hard to understand the nature of issues raised and prioritise accordingly – this was a key piece of ongoing work; Housing teams and the Contact Centre were fully briefed and aware that damp and mould were to be treated as priority cases.
- Full timber fire doors were being installed in tower blocks, which were compliant with fire regulations but not popular with residents as they were not as aesthetically pleasing as composite doors.
- Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service was pleased with the Council's progress in relation to fire safety.
- The Council was developing a programme for fire doors in low-rise blocks early in the New Year.
- Lifts were monitored and maintained on a monthly basis via a contractor; when lift issues occurred they tended to have a big negative impact on residents in terms of access.

- The Council employed the services of specialist external contractors in relation to some elements of compliance – largely the high risk elements of compliance; the Council had good relationships with internal and external partners.
- The relevant regulations stated how prioritisation in terms of compliance activity should be undertaken.

The Panel:

1. **Noted** the contents of the report.
2. **Requested** that a regular update report on Building Safety & Compliance within Housing Revenue Account Stock be submitted to the Panel for consideration on a biannual basis going forward.

*Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager and Steve Stansfield, Building Compliance and Safety Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

## 32. Housing Performance Monitoring

Amie Rickatson, Strategy and Service Development Manager introduced the report, which set out the Council's performance on a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to Housing Services for Quarter 2 of the 2023/24 municipal year.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- A DAHA Accreditation and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update report was scheduled to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee in January 2024.
- The Strategy and Service Development Manager would share figures relating to how many children were on the housing register waiting list versus how many children were present in the statistics, in order for the Panel to understand additional level of need.
- The DAHA Accreditation was not expected to be achieved until 2025.
- In terms of lobbying work, the Council was part of the recent Emergency Homelessness Summit and was a signatory of a letter submitted to Central Government regarding Temporary Accommodation ahead of the Autumn Statement.
- There had been a significant increase in presentations from victims of domestic abuse over the past year, likely due to changes in legislation.

*Cllr Clarkson left the meeting and did not return.*

- The definition of a major void was in relation to the condition of the property, rather than it being a large size.
- The summer was not seen as a particularly difficult time in relation to the Prevention Duty compared to any other time of year.

The Panel noted the contents of the report and requested the following for the next Housing Performance Monitoring report:

- Metric to be listed next to the KPI (i.e. if a KPI is measured in days, result/target to say 'X days' for clarity).
- Inclusion of narrative around EPC ratings to understand the full picture of EPCs across Council housing stock and confirm the timetable for reaching the target.
- For rent collection, to clarify that an 11% decrease means an 11% decrease in the value of arrears.

*Amie Rickatson, Strategy and Service Delivery Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

### **33. Housing Complaint Handling Performance Q1 & Q2 2023-24**

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, which provided an update on the Council's complaint handling performance in relation to the landlord function for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2023/24. Overall, it was a positive report, but complaints was an area where the Council could always improve.

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager provided an overview of the contents of the report.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- There would be the ability to drill down into the 'other' category for complaints in respect of ODS to understand what those complaints related to.
- Oxford City Council and ODS provided different services, which was why the nature of complaints for the two organisations were different.
- The Landlord Services Manager could provide a further breakdown of compensation paid at the next Panel meeting, to highlight the number of people receiving compensation and the rate of compensation generally paid out.

The Panel:

1. **Noted** the contents of the report.
2. **Requested** that regular updates on Housing Complaint Handling Performance be submitted to the Panel.

*Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

### **34. City of Sanctuary Accreditation [presentation]**

Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager provided an overview of the slides included in the agenda pack, which set out the work that the Council was doing towards achieving City of Sanctuary Accreditation.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- There would be a report on this topic to Cabinet in 2024, which Members would have the opportunity to input into via the usual pre-decision Scrutiny model.
- This was a Council-wide piece of work, with buy-in from all service areas, including senior management.
- The Accreditation was awarded to individual institutions, but the Council was working in partnership with other organisations, including the County Council.
- Asylum Welcome was undertaking a Needs Assessment and part of that work would involve interviewing individuals from a variety of different circumstances, including those with insecure immigration status.
- There was a huge focus on the proactive and reactive work the Council could undertake in relation to individuals who had recently been granted refugee status being evicted from hotels and becoming homeless.

The Panel requested that a regular update on progress towards City of Sanctuary Accreditation be added to the Work Plan, initially on an annual basis.

The Panel agreed to recommend to Cabinet that:

1. The Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.

### **35. Dates of future meetings**

The Panel noted the dates and times of future meetings.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that it was invited to join the Budget Review Group meeting on Tuesday 09 January 2024 for Scrutiny of the Housing element of the Budget.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.07 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Thursday 7 March 2024**

*When decisions take effect:*

*Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired*

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued*

*All other committees: immediately.*

*Details are in the Council's Constitution.*

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## Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

NB This work plan is provisional and is subject to change. Changes made outside meetings are agreed between the Scrutiny Officer and the Chair.

Cabinet items beyond two months in advance are not included on the work plan owing to the greater potential they will move or alternative items of higher priority arise in the meantime.

### 07 March 2024 – confirmed reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2024/25	Yes	A report to recommend the allocation of funds to homelessness services for the prevention and alleviation of rough sleeping.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Implementation of Selective Licensing	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing	David Butler, Head of Planning and Regulatory Services
Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Title of Report:** City of Sanctuary Accreditation

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 05 December 2023 to consider an update on progress towards obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services), Richard Wood (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager) and Stephen Cohen (Refugee & Resettlement Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager introduced the presentation and provided an overview of the work being done across the Council towards

obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. The Accreditation journey was owned jointly by Housing Services and Community Services; however the Accreditation journey was embedded across the whole Council and all other service areas were on board, including support from senior management. Accreditation was described as an evolving, ongoing process and once achieved the Council’s Accreditation would be reviewed every three years.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to assurance that the spirit of the Accreditation was being embraced Council-wide; partnership working with Oxfordshire County Council and other institutions; how different groups of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and their lived experiences fed into this work; advocacy work being undertaken by the Council; how City of Sanctuary work fed into the Council’s inclusive economy work; Central Government policy surrounding migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; resource availability; and opportunities for cross-party input into the Accreditation journey.
5. In particular, during discussion the Panel noted that the Council planned to hold a much larger celebration to mark Refugee Week in June 2024. While the Panel agreed that this was welcome news, it agreed that it was vital for the Council to advocate for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution – both during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis. The Panel noted that this would link in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.***

<b>Report author</b>	Alice Courtney
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**Appendix A**  
**Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of**  
**the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee**

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 05 December 2023 concerning the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1) That the Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.	Yes	We agree that it is vital for the Council to advocate for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis. The Council has supported refugee resettlement for a number of years and continues to do so. In July 2023 the Council made a voluntary commitment to resettle 8 households per year for the next five years. The Council of Sanctuary action plan and associated report, planned for next year will expand on how the Council will go further to create a more welcoming & inclusive City and this will be reported via the Cabinet and Full Council process. It will also include how the Council intends to work with the City of Sanctuary charity on key policy issues to enable positive change more broadly.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 March 2024  
**Report of:** Executive Director (Communities and People)  
**Title of Report:** Allocation of the Preventing Homelessness Budget 2024/25

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To approve the Preventing Homelessness Budget allocations for 2024/25 and to approve the grant of a lease of the Floyds Row premises
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Thriving Communities; Enable an inclusive economy
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28; Asset Management Strategy
<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approve</b> the allocation of the Preventing Homelessness Budget and identified Housing Revenue Account funds to commission homelessness services in 2024/25 as detailed in Table 1 of this report;</li> <li>2. <b>Delegate authority</b> to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing the authority to revise the intended programme at Table 1 within the overall budget if required;</li> <li>3. <b>Approve</b> a commitment of £798,532 from the Preventing Homelessness budget to fund supported accommodation provision from Matilda House for the period of 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2027;</li> <li>4. <b>Delegate authority</b> to the Executive Director for Communities and People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services; and the Head of Law and Governance to procure and enter into an agreement for supported accommodation provision to be delivered from Matilda House for the period 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2027;</li> <li>5. <b>Approve</b> the Council entering into the lease of the Floyds Row premises to St Mungo's on the basis set out in this report; and</li> <li>6. <b>Delegate authority</b> to the Head of Corporate Property in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management; the Head of Financial Services; and the Head of Law and Governance to approve</li> </ol>	

amendments to the final terms and enter into the lease of the Floyds Row premises on terms compliant with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### Appendices

Appendix 1	Risk Register
Appendix 2	List of Commissioned and Funded Services

## Introduction and background

1. The Preventing Homelessness Budget (PHB) provides funding to help alleviate and manage rough sleeping in Oxford. In addition to the statutory requirements placed on the City Council under the Homelessness Reduction Act, the use of this budget is key, and one of the primary ways the City Council seeks to achieve the priority 'Ending rough sleeping' as outlined in 'Oxford City Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028'.
2. The Strategy sets out the direction and priorities for how the City Council, together with partners will work together to address the housing and homelessness crisis in the city. The City Council's Strategy is aligned with the Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, that seeks to ensure that there is sufficient provision of supported accommodation to meet a range of needs, and introduces a housing-led approach to offer of accommodation.
3. Services and projects are therefore funded through the PHB to:
  - a) Prevent rough sleeping from happening in the first place (rough sleeping is rare);
  - b) Minimise the length of time someone spends rough sleeping if this cannot be prevented and (rough sleeping is brief);
  - c) Support people to recover from rough sleeping (rough sleeping is non-recurring).
4. This report presents an overview of developments in relation to rough sleeping and single homelessness over the last 12 months and makes recommendations for the allocation of funding in 2024/25.

## Rough sleeping trends in the city

5. Whilst rough sleeping has increased nationally in the last year, the number of persons experiencing rough sleeping in the city has broadly remained the same. Since April 2023, the monthly number has fluctuated, ranging from 80 individuals seen rough sleeping during May, to 103 in November, an average of 71 (down marginally from 73 in 22/23).
6. The number of individuals rough sleeping in the city on a single night has also fluctuated during 2023/24, reaching a high of 46 in November, and a low of 24 in August. The average number of individuals estimated to be rough sleeping on any

given night during the period April to December 2023 was 32 (marginally lower than 37 in the previous year).

7. The number of individuals who are new to rough sleeping is comparatively low in the city. On the other hand, the city sees more individuals who are long-term rough sleepers and individuals who are returning to rough sleeping, and there is high demand for supported accommodation in the city, meaning that there is further work to do in order to ensure that the instances when individuals do rough sleep are brief and non-recurrent. The City Council is working with partners to ensure that the necessary services are in place to provide alternative and sustainable offers to individuals, particularly for individuals who have multiple and high support needs, such as our continued commitment to Housing First.

### **Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance**

8. The Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance (the Alliance) is a group of organisations (A2Dominion, Aspire, Connection Support, Homeless Oxfordshire and St Mungo's) that came together in 2022 to deliver services across the county under one contract. Services delivered by the Alliance include the city and county outreach services for persons experiencing rough sleeping, supported accommodation such as the hostel O'Hanlon House, shared dispersed supported accommodation, and homelessness prevention services.
9. The Alliance is commissioned through a pooled budget which all District Councils in Oxfordshire, the City Council, the County Council, and the Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Services, contribute towards. Oxfordshire County Council is the lead commissioner of the Alliance.
10. A large proportion of the City Council's Preventing Homelessness Budget - £968,580 in 2024/25 - goes towards funding the Alliance. The remainder of the City Council's overall annual funding commitment to the Alliance (£1,911,399) is met through Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding.
11. The Alliance contract is for a period of 5 years, with an annual contract value of £3.8m for the first three years. 2024/25 is the third year of the contract. High inflation and a cost-of-living crisis in the last few years has seen the cost of delivering services for providers increase. The increase in costs and a flat commissioning budget means that it is likely that services will see efficiency savings, and that there needs to be a reduction or change to some services delivered under the Alliance in 2024/25.

### **Somewhere Safe to Stay service at Floyds Row**

12. A key development and significant change to service that will take place in 2024/25, is the relocation of Somewhere Safe to Stay (SStS) from its current location in Floyds Row. The service is currently delivered under the Alliance contract by St Mungo's.
13. An SStS service aims to address rough sleeping rapidly, by moving people off the street and into a temporary environment where a rehousing plan is developed and

actioned. This service is for people new to rough sleeping. SStS is seen as an important service provision by government, and large amounts of RSI funding has backed these services nationally since 2018. Since the pandemic ended, the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is no longer supportive of provisions of bed/sleeping arrangements in communal space for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. The department is therefore not willing to continue to fund the service at Floyds Row.

14. Therefore, the City Council and Alliance partners have worked closely together over the last year to find an alternative delivery solution. A new model has been developed, which means that the service can be retained in the city. From April 2024, SStS will be relocating partly to O'Hanlon House and partly to dispersed accommodation. The new model has been welcomed and approved by DLUHC.
15. The new service model costs significantly less than the current SStS service delivered from Floyds Row (due to no longer having to run the building and through other shared services bringing efficiency), which means that funds within the Alliance budget envelop have been freed up and reinvested to protect other services which may otherwise have seen reductions or cuts.
16. The City Council owns the freehold of the Floyds Row premises and the property is current occupied by St Mungo's which is delivering the SStS service from the building. This report seeks authority for the City Council to grant a lease to St Mungo's.
17. The proposed lease is for a term from 9th May 2023 to 1st April 2024 at a pro-rata rent of £180,000 per annum. Under the proposed lease St Mungo's is responsible for repairs to the property save that the Council is responsible for any repairs required to the roof.
18. Following St Mungo's leaving the site in April, the City Council will explore options available to generate revenue through a new letting, regeneration potential or a possible capital receipt.

### **Additional sources of funding and Oxford City Council commissioning**

19. In addition to the services delivered by the Alliance, the City Council commissions other much needed services in Oxford through the Prevention Homelessness Budget as set out in Table 1. The City Council also uses funds secured through successful bids to a range of different government funding streams, including the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) and the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP). In 2022, the City Council led on a countywide bid for RSI funding, which saw just over £5m being awarded to the county for a three-year period (April 2022 to March 2025). Just over £4m of these funds are for services and initiative in the city as detailed in Appendix 2.



## Matilda House

20. Matilda House is a 37-unit hostel located in Oxford that provides shared accommodation in small ‘clusters’, each with bedrooms with ensuite showers and a shared kitchen, as well as a small number of self-contained units. The City Council commissioned A2Dominion to deliver this service in 2019 and the current arrangement is due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. The service has been funded through the PHB since 2019. Matilda House is a much needed service and the City Council intends to re-commission the service until March 2027. This would align the provision of this service with the end of the Alliance contract. Such re-commissioning will need to comply with relevant procurement requirements.
21. The annual cost of the service at present is £266,000. The cost to deliver this service over recent years has increased due to inflation. The indicative annual cost for 2024/25 is £293,000 and this will apply from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 when the re-commissioned service is to commence. The annual cost for the service will then increase further in the following years, with officer calculations setting estimating costs at £307,650 in 2025/26 and £319,956 in 2026/27. Following the re-commissioning of the service the City Council will be contractually obliged to pay the total cost of a support service at Matilda House, which is likely to be £798,532 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027. An increased proportion of the annual PHB will therefore be required to fund this provision going forward.
22. At present, the full cost of the support provision at Matilda House is met by the City Council. However, to ensure that this important hostel provision is available for individuals from across the County who may need this service, City Council officers are working with colleagues in District Councils, the County Council and the Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Services, and asking for financial contributions towards the service from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 in order for their clients to access the accommodation. If such contributions are agreed, the overall cost to the City Council would reduce, allowing for underspend against the PHB thus generated to be used for other services, if approved.

### Recommendation for the allocation of the Preventing Homelessness Budget (PHB) 2024/25

23. In 2023/24, a total of £1,670,994 was available to use for the commissioning of service using the Preventing Homelessness Budget. This constituted of the following:

Source	Amount
Core Preventing Homelessness Budget	£1,543,200
Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) – central government funding	£86,630
Carry forward from 2022/23	£41,164
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,670,994</b>

24. During 2023/4, there have been some key changes to the original PHB allocation and anticipated spend of these funds, most notable the commissioning of a

Community Health Champions initiative delivered through the Gatehouse. This was possible due to allocated funding for the Women’s hub no longer being needed. The providers of the Women’s hub made the decision not to continue with this service during spring 2023.

25. The Council’s budget for 2024/25 allocates £1,654,429 in total to the Preventing Homelessness Budget. It comprises the following:

Source	Amount
Core Preventing Homelessness Budget	£1,543,200
Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) – central government funding	£111,229
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,654,429</b>

26. There are pressures on the PHB this year, stemming primarily from a need to increase the allocation of funds for our severe weather emergency response from £15,000 to £30,000 due to rising running costs and need to ensure there are sufficient funds to provide this key service, increase in cost for support provision in Matilda House (as outlined above) from £266,000 to £281,750, as well as having no underspend to carry forward this year as there was last year. Due to the pressures, officers have earmarked additional funds from the central government Homelessness Prevention Grant to contribute to the PHB in 2024/25. Despite this injection, all services funded in 2023/24 cannot be funded within the available budget envelop in 2024/25. This means that there are proposals in Table 1 to reduce or stop the following services:

- a) De-commissioning of 3 ‘Progression Beds’ delivered by Connection Support. The service is aimed at individuals with low support needs with a focus on providing support to access employment. With a significant increase in similar kind of provision in the city through other schemes such as Settled Oxfordshire and Social Lettings, and a review of the service suggesting other models are more effective, leads to this recommendation.
- b) Stop funding the Tenancy Sustainment Support delivered by Elmore Community Services from the Preventing Homelessness Budget, and for the service to continue to be funded in 2024/25 at the same level as in 2023/24 from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as it is a service exclusively for City Council tenants. A review of the service, alongside other tenancy sustainment support provided, and the need in council stock, will take place during 2024/25, with the view to inform what service model is needed and then commissioned in 2025/26.
- c) Discontinue funding of the Community Health Champions, due to service provider not continuing the service after the current funding period.
- d) Reduce the allocation of funds towards the use of leisure services. The allocation has not been exhausted in full over the last few years, and a reduction to this allocation of 50% is therefore recommended as this is in line with previous years’ actual spent, and so will have no expected impact on service users.

27. A full breakdown of the proposed allocations, is available in Table 1.
28. The allocation of funds to all services in Table 1, apart from Matilda House, will be managed through Grant Assistance Agreements with the providers. The allocation to Matilda House will be managed through a contract awarded following a procurement process.

Table 1. – Preventing Homelessness Budget allocations in 2023/24 and recommended allocations for 2024/25.

Name of service	Current provider/supplier	Cabinet report Allocation 2023/24	Recommended allocation 2024/25	Comments
<b>Increased to funding allocation</b>				
Matilda House	A2Dominion	£266,000	£281,750	37 units of supported accommodation in Matilda House. The funding for this service will increase from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024, following the end of the current contract.
Severe Weather Emergency provision	Various providers	£15,000	£30,000	Funding towards provision of emergency beds for during periods of severe weather for all rough sleepers who need them. Increase in allocation due to increase in costs and need to ensure there are sufficient funds to meet demand.
<b>Unchanged funding allocation</b>				
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance	Oxford City Council contribution to pooled budget	£968,580	£968,580	Ongoing Council commitment. The Council has entered into a partnering agreement to contribute toward the pooled budget for this provision. Allocation supports the provision of homelessness services delivered by the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance.
Gatehouse café	The Gatehouse	£5,580	£5,580	Funding contribution towards core costs for the Gatehouse café. The services support and engage people sleeping rough, and those who are homeless or vulnerably housed to access accommodation and specialist support. Funding amount unchanged.
The Porch day centre	The Porch	£55,000	£55,000	Funding contribution towards core costs for The Porch. The Porch is a key day centre provision in the city that provides a range of support and services (activities, training, and education), including food, showers, and laundry facilities, for those who are sleeping rough, homeless, or vulnerably housed. The centre works closely with other services to ensure individuals are signposted and linked in with appropriate specialist services. Funding amount unchanged.
Employment, training and education workers	Aspire Oxford	£53,098	£53,098	Funding for service that provides training and employment opportunities for homeless and/or vulnerably housed individuals in Oxford. Essential 'wrap-around' and prevention tool. Funding amount unchanged.
OxTHINK	Real Systems	£7,000	£7,000	Meets the core costs (set number of licences and maintenance) for database OxTHINK. Key tool to capture data to understand trends, pressures, and outcomes. Plans under countywide strategy will eventually see the commissioning of a countywide databased, which will then see this allocation end in the future.

Target Hardening / Sanctuary Scheme	Oxford City Council	£30,000	£30,000	Funding contribution towards the cost of a post in the Anti-Social Behaviour Team at Oxford City Council. Supports victims of domestic abuse to enable them to stay in their homes through 'target hardening' measures. Funding amount unchanged.
Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Team	Oxford City Council	£220,921	£220,921	Funding for core Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Team. Annual increase to salaries will be met through core budget as with other salary increases. Funding amount unchanged.
<b>Reduced funding allocation</b>				
Access to Leisure Services	Oxford City Council	£5,000	£2,500	Funds cost associated with providing access to the Council's leisure facilities free of charge for former rough sleepers. Due to previous years allocations not being use in full, the funding amount has been reduced, based on estimated costs in 2024/25 based on previous years usage of funds.
<b>End of funding/ decommissioning of service</b>				
29 Progression Units	Connection Support	£19,500	£0	Funds for the provision of 3 units of supported accommodation for those individuals with low needs and who are preparing to move into independent living. Pressure on the PHB funds means that the City Council needs to prioritise which services can be funded going forward. With a significant increase in similar kind of provision through other, and a review of the service suggesting other models are more effective, leading to this recommendation that this service is decommissioned.
Women's Hub	Aspire and The Gatehouse	£7,500	£0	Service discontinued by provider.
Tenancy sustainment	Elmore Community Services	£17,815	£0	Funding for specialist sustainment officer to support residents in Oxford City Council accommodation to maintain their tenancies. Service to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account in 2024-25.
<b>Total Allocation 2024/25</b>			<b>£1,654,429</b>	PHG balanced following difficult decisions to stop funding one service, seeing reduction in funding to one service, and ensuring one services can continue due to being funded through a different Council funding stream.

29. The proposed allocations, as detailed in Table 1, are likely to be used to the full by the services/projects. In the event of any changes to spend during 2024/25, it is recommended that Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Communities and People to revise the allocations set out in the table provided they are within the overall budget.

### **Financial implications**

30. The council will spend £1,654,429 on managing the impact of and preventing rough sleeping in 2024/25 through the allocation of the PHG budget and as detailed in Table 1.
31. At the time of writing the report, no underspends against any of the allocations in 2023/24 are anticipated.
32. Cabinet should note the ongoing contractual commitments the City Council has previously agreed to contribute to the Alliance contract that ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027. As mentioned above, an agreed budget and commissioner contributions was agreed for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. Discussions on the setting of the budget for the remaining two years of the contract will start in spring 2024.
33. Cabinet should also note the increased financial commitment over the next few years, due to the new commissioning and funding required for the provision of a support service at Matilda House from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 and until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027.
34. The Alliance and Matilda House contracts together represent the vast majority of the PHB budget and means the Council will have contractual commitments to continue to fund these services until 2027, constraining the Council's options for reductions in funding levels or significant changes in use until then.
35. As outlined in this report, and set out in detail in Appendix 2, a large number of services for single homeless individuals and those experiencing rough sleeping, are funded by government funding such as RSI and RSAP/NSAP. RSAP/NSAP and RSI ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and with a general election this year, there is considerable uncertainty regarding future approach, and therefore it unknown when and local authorities will receive information in relation to funding allocations from April 2025.
36. The financial implications in relation to the lease for Floyds Row are that the rent is secured for the term of the lease.

### **Performance monitoring**

37. In distributing this budget, the City Council will ensure that there are clear outcomes and targets in each organisation's service specification which are reported on quarterly. Quarterly, 6-monthly, or annual performance monitoring meetings will take place with all services to ensure that outcomes and targets are achieved, and issues are addressed in a timely and professional manner.

## **Legal issues**

38. Under part 4.5 (26) of the Council's Constitution Cabinet is empowered to agree the grants set out in Table 1 of this report and under part 4.5 (10) Cabinet can agree the proposed use of funds for the Matilda House project at recommendation 3. Under Section 9E of the Local Government Act 2000 Cabinet can delegate any of its functions to an officer.
39. All grants given will need a written agreement between the City Council and the recipient. A contract for supported accommodation at Matilda House will need to be procured and awarded in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Constitution.
40. Where any changes to current service provision are proposed consideration needs to be given the City Council's Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act.
41. The head of terms for the Floyds Row lease have been agreed and the draft lease is currently in circulation. The proposed lease is on terms compliant with Section 123 Local Government Act 1972.

## **Level of risk**

42. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 1.

## **Equalities impact**

43. All services in receipt of funding are subject to monitoring which includes equality and diversity.
44. The decommissioning of the three supported accommodation units (shared accommodation) delivered by Connection Support – as detailed in paragraph 26 - does not detrimentally affect any persons, especially persons with protected characteristics. Whilst the decommissioning of this service, will result in be three fewer beds available for persons who have a history or rough sleeping/homelessness and have low support needs, there is sufficient provision of supported accommodation for such persons in the city. In addition, through the monitoring of this service, it suggests that other models of lower needs support provision is more effective.
45. The Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Team have worked with colleagues in Connection Support to ensure alternative accommodation is found for the individuals resident in the service in order to ensure that the decommissioning of the service is not detrimental to their recovery from homelessness. The team and Connection Support will continue to work together to ensure that current residents can move to accommodation with support that meets their individual needs, and thus ensure that the move to other accommodation is a positive move that will lead to good outcomes for the individuals. This includes residents moving to other supported accommodation services that can provide support for persons with

higher support needs, and which will better meet the persons' needs than the current service. Where possible, individuals will be offered accommodation with the same provider, in order to ensure there is continuity of support and relationships.

- 46. The reduction in funding in relation to Access to Leisure Services – as detailed in paragraph 26 - will not detrimentally affect any persons, especially persons with protected characteristics. The recommendation to reduce funding has been made based on previous years use of these funds. There has been consistent underspend against the allocated funds in previous years, which suggests that the allocated amount for 2024/25 will be sufficient to meet the need.
- 47. In relation to the lease at Floyds Row, this is a commercial letting at market rent and an equalities assessment is not required.

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**Background Papers:** None



# Appendix 1

Appendix 1: Risk Register

Wlwoh	Ulvn#ghvfulswlrg	Rss2#wkuldhw	Pdxvh	Prqvhtxhqfth	Gdwh#Udlvhg Rzqhu	Jurvv FxuuhgWhvlgxio Frpphqvw						Frqwurov						
						L	S	L	S	L	S	Frqwurov#ghvfulswlrg	Gxh#gdw	Vdwvxv	Surjuhv#	Dfwlrg#Rzqhu		
Failure of service delivery	Commissioned services don't deliver expected outcomes	Threat	Inadequate monitoring or inappropriate service measures applied	Potential increase in rough sleeping	14/01/2024	Ossi Mosley	3	3	3	1	3	1		Service measures agreed in partnership with providers. Robust monitoring regime put in place and regularly reviewed	1/4/24	In Progress	75	Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Team
New and/or increase in demand	Changing circumstances during the year require different services to be delivered.	Threat	Always a risk. We have a good track record, demonstrated primarily through the pandemic, that we can manage significant change together with our partners.	Increase in rough sleeping.	14/01/2023	Ossi Mosley	4	3	4	3	3	2		Power delegated to vary services. Working in partnership with service providers encourages flexibility on their part.	31/03/25	Will progress if necessary	0	Francesca Barr
Increase in rough sleeping	An increase in rough sleeping puts pressure on services funded by this grant	Threat	The increase in cost of living, changes to service delivered by others not preventing rough sleeping or being sufficient, might lead to an increase in rough sleeping.	Services unable to meet demand	14/01/2024	Ossi Mosley	3	3	3	3	2	2		Ensure prevention work is funded, and focused on preventing rough sleeping; enabling SSIS and other rapid rehousing solutions; adopting a system wide approach to managing homelessness.	31/03/25	In Progress	0	Francesca Barr/Brendan Lewis
Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	SWEP will be difficult to deliver in 23/24 if suitable accommodation/staffing is not sourced.	Threat	Lack of planning	Rough sleepers may be unable to access emergency provision in spells of cold weather	14/01/2024	Ossi Mosley	4	3	3	2	2	2		Work with the Alliance and partners to find locations and agree staffing arrangements for next winter during this spring and summer.	01/09/24	Not started	0	Brendan Lewis
Government funding commitments come to an end	Services commissioned using government funding end from 31st March 2025, seeing a large reduction in accommodation units and other services in the city	Threat	No further funds available from government	End of service provision for government funded services	14/01/2025	Ossi Mosley	4	3	3	3	2	2		Close liaison with DLUHC to ensure we are made aware of future funding intention as soon as possible	08/01/24	In Progress	0	Ossi Mosley/Richard Wood
Ongoing contractual commitments - Alliance	Council commitments to fund the Alliance for a total of 5 years	Threat	Increase in costs of services provision (increased demand and inflation costs) leading to increased cost for services delivered under the Alliance. Pressure on Council finances may limit contributions that can be made.	Reduction in services	14/01/2026	Ossi Mosley	4	3	3	3	2	2		Budget negotiations with Alliance providers and commissioners starting spring 2024 to ensure agreements can be reached as early as possible in 2024/25, with mitigations put in place where necessary.	07/01/24	Not started	0	Ossi Mosley
Not receiving payment from St Mungos	If we do not enter into the lease prior to 31st March St Mungos will not be obliged to make their contribution towards rent payments	Threat	Delay in negotiations on lease	Increased costs for HRA	02/02/2024	Emma Gubbins	4	3	3	3	2	2		Draft lease has been circulated and is being negotiated. All parties working to the same timeline	31/03/2024	In progress	40%	Emma Gubbins
Ongoing contractual commitments - Matilda House	Recommissioning of support provision within Matilda House from 1st September onwards with increased costs to the Council	Threat	Increase in cost of provision	Pressure on Council PHG funds for new contract period once the services has been recommissioned	14/01/2027	Ossi Mosley	4	3	3	3	2	2		Discussions taking place with District, County and BOB ICB in relation to financial contributions to the services, which will ease the pressure on City Council funds.	09/01/24	In progress	20%	Ossi Mosley

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**Appendix 2 – External services and projects commissioned/funded by Oxford City Council Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Team 2024/25**

<b>Preventing Homelessness Budget (as recommended)</b>	
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance	Financial contribution towards the provision of homelessness services delivered by the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance.
Matilda House	22 units of supported accommodation for people with complex needs and 15 units of move on accommodation (mixture of shared and self-contained accommodation).
Severe Weather Emergency Beds	Additional emergency bed spaces in periods of severe weather for all rough sleepers who need them.
The Porch	Provides support and engages people sleeping rough, who are homeless or vulnerably housed through a range of activities, training and education and where appropriate signpost clients to more appropriate services.
Gatehouse café	Provides support and engages people sleeping rough, who are homeless or vulnerably housed to access accommodation and specialist support.
Employment, Training and Education workers	Provides training, education and employment opportunities and support for homeless and/or vulnerably housed individuals in Oxford.
Target Hardening/Sanctuary Scheme	A post in the Anti-Social Behaviour Team to support victims of domestic abuse and enable them to stay in their own homes through target hardening measures.
Access to leisure services	Funding to enable former rough sleepers to access the Council's leisure facilities free of charge.
OxTHINK	Licences and maintenance for the rough sleeping database.
<b>Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 2022-25, including additional awards</b>	
Provision within the Alliance such as outreach and accommodation services	Funding contribution towards services such as outreach for individuals experiencing rough sleeping and various supported accommodation projects such as Pre-Recovery Project (for individuals to work with Turning Point towards detox or rehab- 7 bed spaces) and the Women's Project (small scale women's only provision- 5 bed spaces).
Legal costs for normalising immigration status	Funding relating to legal costs required to regularise the immigration status of any homeless individuals with no recourse to public funds.
Off the Street Placement funds	Provides additional units of short-term accommodation to prevent rough sleeping in Oxford City
Personalisation/Make it happen fund	Funds to divert entry away from supported accommodation in Oxford and to resolve delays regarding move into accommodation, by helping individuals become ready for move on, and by financing moves when clients are ready.
Embedded Workers in hostel	Provides individuals with complex support needs who are currently residing in supported accommodation with additional support around independent living skills, integration into the community, access into other services to meet their needs and move on into appropriate longer-term accommodation.
Multi-disciplinary Team	Funds a number of roles in an MDT to support homeless individuals including a clinical psychologist, Mental Health Practitioner and Social Worker.
Psychiatric support	Psychiatric support to enable individuals in mental health crisis to access the support they need and free up clinical psychologist resource to conduct therapeutic interventions for the recovery of people in supported accommodation, and ultimately enable them to move on.
Homeless Prevention intervention (benefit specialist advice)	Service for those with a history of rough sleeping to provide specialist benefits advice around claiming and receiving the correct benefits from the full range of UK benefits.

Social Lettings/Home	Provides accommodation to support and enable people who are at risk of homelessness, or recovering from homelessness, to develop their personal readiness and confidence to move on to independent living. 28 bed spaces across 8 properties at present.
Move on and enabling worker and personalisation funds	Provides support to staff within supported accommodation services in Oxford City to support residents to move on into independent or otherwise more suitable accommodation.
Tenancy Sustainment Worker	Provides tenancy sustainment/floating support to individuals who have moved on to independent accommodation from supported accommodation.
<b>Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)</b>	
Housing First	Provides self-contained and permanent accommodation to individuals with a long history of rough sleeping and/or homelessness, and who have multiple support needs. 35 units of accommodation by end of March 2024.
Settled Oxfordshire	47 units of supported accommodation delivered in HMO's and self-contained units. Provides accommodation and support for individuals who are at risk of or have a history of rough sleeping and who have low support needs. The aim of this service is to provide housing and to enable individuals to move on and be able to sustain independent living.
Additional supported accommodation	Funding for additional supported accommodation units to support and enable people who are at risk of homelessness, or recovering from homelessness, to develop their personal readiness and confidence to move on to independent living.
<b>Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP)</b>	
Housing First	Will provide an additional 17 units with accommodation and support by the end of March 2025. 12 of these units will be acquired by the Council and acquisitions are part funded by SHAP.
<b>Accommodation for Ex-Offenders</b>	
Accommodation for Ex-offenders	Funding to support ex-offenders at risk of rough sleeping into private rental sector accommodation.

**To:** Housing and Homelessness panel  
**Date:** 07 March 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Planning & Regulatory Services  
**Title of Report:** Selective Licensing Implementation

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To provide a report on the year 1 actions of the Selective Licensing scheme
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Deliver More Affordable Housing
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 -2028
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b>	
1. <b>Note and comment</b> on the report and <b>agree</b> any recommendations.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Year 1 Review Report

## Introduction and background

1. The city-wide Selective Licensing scheme was introduced on 01 September 2022. The scheme required Central Government approval which the Council received in April 2022. The scheme means that all privately rented homes in the city require a licence to operate; this is in addition to the HMO licensing scheme which continues to operate.
2. The scheme was introduced to tackle poor conditions in the non-HMO stock, and for the first time a proactive inspection programme of such properties can be developed.
3. A review of year 1 of the scheme is attached in Appendix 1; this outlines in more detail the outcomes to date.

## **Implementation of the scheme**

4. The Council had a short amount of time to implement the scheme, during this time the following had to be undertaken:
  - a. Statutory publication in local newspapers over a 3-month period at specified intervals and on Council noticeboards
  - b. Procurement and implementation of an application system, to be operational on the start date
  - c. Recruitment of Application Officers and formation of a new team
  - d. Recruitment of Enforcement Officers
  - e. Provision of information to landlords
  - f. Training of applications officers to receive applications from the start of the scheme.
5. A Project Board was introduced which monitored the progress of the implementation and the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the scheme. This involved relevant services within the Council who worked together to ensure the tight deadlines of implementation were met.

## **Financial implications**

6. The scheme is self-funding, with any income received from licensing fees funding the operation and enforcement of the scheme.
7. The initial business case, which was developed following an extensive consultation exercise, estimated that there would be 7,200 applications within the first year of the scheme. There were 10,896.
8. However, as processing has progressed those applications receiving an early bird discount was 44.4% in year 1 compared to a predicted 35%; those applications receiving an accredited discount was 43.4% as opposed to a predicted 40%; and those applications not receiving discounts was 10.4% compared to a predicted 25%. This resulted in the Fees being reviewed and increased in year 2.

## **Legal issues**

9. The scheme had to be confirmed by the Government before it was implemented in the City and therefore all legal issues relating to Selective Licensing were outlined in the previous Cabinet reports of [March 2021](#) and [September 2020](#). However, Law and Governance continue to support the work by providing advice when required on issues arising.

## **Level of risk**

10. The original Risk Register for the Cabinet report identified a number of risks concerning the introduction of the scheme including the risk of a judicial review and the inability to introduce the scheme due to the submission being rejected. The Selective Licensing Board identified the risk of being unable to recruit qualified and experienced officers to be able to carry out the inspections and enforcement work. The teams continue to work with the People Team to mitigate this risk.

## Equalities impact

11. The introduction of Selective Licensing was introduced to improve the private rented sector in the City and was considered a benefit to occupiers of private rented homes and other residents. This report does not raise any further equalities issues.

## Conclusion

12. Further review reports outlining progress and outcomes will be produced as the scheme progresses. These reports will be published on the Council's website.

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**Background Papers:** None

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## Selective Licensing Scheme 2022: Year 1 Progress report

### Purpose: To update on the implementation of the Selective Licensing Scheme 2022

The Selective Licensing scheme started on 01 September 2022. Before the scheme started, in Autumn 2020, the Council conducted a statutory consultation exercise. In March 2021, the Council approved 2 designations. Together, these designations cover the whole city area. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed the designations in April 2022. The scheme must be operative from 1st September 2022 to 31st August 2027.

DLUHC requested the Council submit regular progress reports. Consultation feedback highlighted the need to report throughout the scheme on progress.

The Council when developing the scheme, estimated that 12,000 properties will need a licence, with 7,200 of the applications to be made in year 1. The Council predicted it would take 12 months from date of application to issue a licence. After issuing the licence, property inspections take place. A risk rating system is in place to identify those likely to be in the worst condition. The Council expect to inspect 60% of licensed properties during the lifetime of the scheme.

### Progress summary

- The number of applications received exceeded predictions. In year 1, we received 10,896 applications. When including 159 block licences, the applications covered over 12,300 properties.
- To incentivise landlords, a discount was offered to applications made by 30 November 2022. To help agents, we offered to extend this period to 31 January 2023. These are known as “early bird” applications. We received 9,057 applications in this period. 39% of applicants received an early bird discount and 47% of the 9057 applications came from accredited landlords and managing agents;
  - Of those who submitted applications by 30 November 2022, 81% had received a draft licence and 63% a final licence.
  - Of those in the phasing agreement who submitted applications by 30 November 2022, 69% had received a draft licence and 36% a final licence
- The Council issued 2,138 final licences in year 1;
- Work on finding unlicensed properties began in March 2023. We have investigated 83 cases, with 49 applications made and 16 exempt. The remaining cases are still under investigation.
- In year 1, inspection work has only been undertaken through reactive service complaint work. 61 properties in the scheme were inspected. Of these, 36 (59%) were found to have serious (Category One) hazards.

## Challenges & lessons learned

- Significant challenges have been:
  - Recruitment and retention of applications officers. The Council expects excellent customer service and high quality. In line with entry level positions, there has been a regular turnover of officers;
  - The application system works on credit card payments. Large managing agents requested BACS payments. Reconciliation of payments was not in the procured system. The extra work has delayed application processing.
  - Due to the quick implementation, there was minimal time for testing the procured system. This proved difficult at times. We have made efficiency improvements throughout the year.
- Lessons learned are:
  - As the applications system was more resource-intensive than planned, the number of processing officers was decreased from originally planned to enable more focus on training existing officers.
  - Allowing BACS payment for large managing agents created extra work to process each application, which had not been included in the original projections of processing time or application fees. Especially as sending transfers manually leaves room for human error, this greatly slowed down processing. A more streamlined process was developed which partially automated the process, enabling an improvement in the processing time.
  - Procedures are regularly reviewed to look for ways to reduce processing times through automation wherever possible. This is on-going work and has been carried out alongside the implementation of the application system. Utilising the experience of our officers to provide more insight into areas that the system can be improved has proved a successful strategy and allowed exploration into ways that any changes could be delivered. The Team embraced new technology available to the Council using cloud-based storage solutions for processing guides to ensure officers always have access to the current procedures.

## Future work

Year 2 will focus on:

- Issuing the remaining Year 1 licences. We estimate it will take to 01 April 2024 to issue the remaining applications in the early bird scheme and to 01 October 2024 to issue the remaining phasing agreement applications.
- Implementing large-scale inspection programme
- Investigation of unlicensed properties
- Developing guidance for landlords on property standards.

## Background

Property licensing schemes are a major contributing factor to the Councils aim to "Deliver more affordable housing." They improve conditions in the private rented sector in the city. The purpose of the licensing scheme is to address poor conditions and reduce the number of privately rented homes containing serious hazards.

The Council has operated HMO licensing since 2006. This was when mandatory (national) licensing requirements started. From 2011, HMO licensing has operated on a citywide basis

covering all HMOs. With the introduction of selective licensing any privately rented property within the city unless statutorily exempt will need a property licence to operate.

### **Privately Rented Homes**

The private rented sector in Oxford is one of the largest in England. An independent review took place in 2020, before Selective Licensing began. It estimated that 49.3% of the city's housing stock was privately rented, or 30,508 properties. The 2021 census figures predict that 32.2% (17,762) of households lived in the private rented sector. The difference between the figures is because the census figures are based on the number of households living in the private rented sector. In contrast, the Council's independent review counted the number of privately rented properties. It is clear from both datasets that the private rented sector in the city is above the national average of 19%.

The private rented sector is a valued part of the city's housing market and local economy. It provides homes across the whole city. The sector has grown over the last 20 years. There is intense competition for affordable accommodation in the city due to the lack of affordable rents. One consequence is that some landlords have exploited tenants by letting out property in a poor condition. The property is often unsafe, and in some cases dangerous. A review of housing conditions in the private rented sector found that 6242 (20.5%) of dwellings in the sector were predicted to have at least one category 1 hazard. This is compared to the national average of 12% and almost double the regional average of 10.3%.

### **Licensing of Privately rented homes**

The Selective Licensing scheme aims to improve poor conditions within privately rented homes. The Council will inspect properties with a high likelihood of hazards. This is due to complaint history, property type, and lack of information or incorrect documentation in applications. This will ensure that non-HMO properties are inspected on a proactive basis rather than waiting for an occupier to complain. Upon inspection, we will assess the property for hazards in all cases. Every assessment will always include Damp & Mould, Excess Cold, and Fire. The Council's independent review identified these as the three most common hazards found in privately rented homes.

The council also investigates suspected unlicensed properties. Feedback from the 2020 consultation was that for the first year of the scheme we should inform landlords of the need to licence before taking enforcement action. In future years, a more robust approach will be taken. This could result in the landlord receiving a financial penalty.

### **Processing Licence Applications**

In April 2022, DLHUC notified the Council of their approval of the scheme. The Council had a brief period to introduce an applications system. The Council also needed to ensure appropriate resources were available. This was to manage the receipt of licence applications. The Council introduced a new online application system. The online system went live on the scheme start date of 01 September 2022. Landlords and agents were not able to apply in advance. This meant the Council immediately had a backlog of applications.

As with all new schemes, the council and applicants have had to adapt to this new way of working.

The Council provided a demonstration of the new system to landlords. Agents were able to use the test system before the start of the scheme to make “dummy” applications. The Council produced a video and extensive guide to assist applicants. Officers have also worked to ensure that guidance on our website is up to date with all application requirements and frequently asked questions.

The new system has proved to be more resource intensive than planned. Due to this, processing has been reduced at times. This is also due to the system not being fully automated and the amount of training required for applications officers.

In year 1 of the scheme, the Council had received 10,896 applications and issued 2,138 licences.

### **Licence conditions**

Each property licence contains 23 conditions, including matters as gas safety, electrical safety, furniture safety, providing and maintaining smoke alarms and supplying occupants with written terms of occupancy. Unlike HMO licences, conditions applied to selective licences are limited by a Court of Appeal ruling. The ruling is in *Brown v Hyndburn Borough Council*. The Court of Appeal ruled that "management" related to operational matters. It did not include improving or upgrading houses. It also did not include installing new facilities and equipment. Improvements or requirements for new facilities will be dealt with under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.

Before a licence is issued, applicants can make representations to the council about the proposed conditions. In year 1, 249 landlords and agents made representations. This equates to 8% of draft licences issued. The data indicates that the vast majority of landlords are satisfied with the proposed conditions. Most representations received have been regarding permitted numbers. When reviewing representations either the applicant made an error on their application, or the room size is within a permitted tolerance range.

### **Types of licence**

The scheme included discounted licence fees for applications received before the end of November 2022. This was to incentivise property owners and managers to apply. Larger managing agents had until the end of January 2023 to submit applications; these are known as "early bird" discounts. An accredited licence holder or managing agent with full management control was able to gain a further discount. The Council also offered a “block licence” in the first year of the scheme. Flats in a block, with the same freeholder and manager, could apply for one licence for the whole block rather than individual licences.

In the early bird period, 9,057 applications were received. As the discount is applied to stage2 payments, the breakdown of the types of licences issued is on-going as the backlog is worked through. Currently 39% of the applications received the early bird discount. An additional 47% (to date) of applications received during the early bird period received an accreditation discount.

## **Enforcement of the Licensing Scheme**

In year 1 of the scheme, enforcement work has continued to be mostly reactive. It follows service requests about privately rented homes. In year 2 a program of inspections will start. Over the scheme, the aim is to inspect 60% of the licenced properties.

The inspection programme will be risk rated. This assessment is part of the licence application processing. It is based on the compliance history of the landlord/manager and the information in the application documentation. Block licences are high priority irrespective of compliance history.

Once an inspection has been completed, we will consider serving formal notices. We will request the landlord to remove any serious home hazards. If such notices are not complied the council will consider the following options:

- service of a financial penalty;
- carrying out the works in default;
- prosecution.

Those in receipt of formal notices have the right to appeal to the First Tier Tribunal.

To ensure the scheme is effective, the Council also investigate unlicensed properties. The Council have undertaken 83 investigations into un-licensed properties. Of these, 49 have made an application and 16 are exempt. The remaining cases are under investigation. To date there has been no formal action required to ensure a licence application is made. In year 2, work will continue to identify unlicensed properties. Failing to license a property may result in a financial penalty or prosecution.

## **Income and expenditure**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Number of Applications	7200	1512	1140	998	570
<i>costs</i>					
Applications Processing etc	£ 2,160,804	£ 411,648	£ 311,527	£ 280,853	£ 165,249
General Costs - Representations/variatiions /withdrawn applications	£ 111,600	£ 14,369	£ 10,524	£ 9,485	£ 5,583
General Enquiries& Service Requests	£ 295,200	£ 38,007	£ 27,838	£ 25,089	£ 14,767
Enforcement - non compliance	£ 712,290	£ 91,707	£ 67,171	£ 60,537	£ 35,631
landlord Liaison/promotiom	£ 47,524	£ 6,119	£ 4,482	£ 4,039	£ 2,377
Travel/ICT	£ 98,640	£ 12,700	£ 9,302	£ 8,383	£ 4,934
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£ 3,426,059</b>	<b>£ 574,549</b>	<b>£ 430,843</b>	<b>£ 388,387</b>	<b>£ 228,541</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>£ 2,678,400</b>	<b>£ 760,572</b>	<b>£ 668,820</b>	<b>£ 602,774</b>	<b>£ 354,776</b>

The above table shows the predictions for a cost neutral scheme. As the scheme operates over 5 years this must be reviewed regularly, however changes should not be made unless the reviews show a sustained change in the income and expenditure.

10,896 applications were received in year 1 (September 2022 to August 2023). This is 34% higher than the predicted number.

As the scheme commenced in September 2022, alignment to the fiscal year is necessary. For the fiscal year 2022/23, the predicted number of applications would be 6,000. In the fiscal year 2022/23 we received 9,728 applications and an income of £2,141,837. The predicted costs in year 1 were considerably more than the actual cost (£517,135). This is due to enforcement officers not being recruited in year 1. Recruitment will occur in fiscal year 2 (23/24) and fiscal year 3 (24/25) which will mean that the costs in these years will be higher than predicted in the table above. The scheme will remain cost-neutral.

### **Issues arising**

Training officers in using the applications system has been a challenge, as the applications team was required to create procedures alongside providing training and support for officers. However, officers have worked to automate and streamline parts of processing to reduce the impact of long training times and staff turnover.

The Enforcement team maintained existing staffing levels. This meant the Enforcement team only undertook reactive work. This included work on unlicensed properties. Proactive inspection work will commence from year 2. The number of inspections will increase in the following years as resources increase.

As part of the application process, some managing agents could not use card payments. Therefore payments by BACS were requested, which was outside the applications process. This meant more work for the Applications team and Finance team. Officers have now implemented a system to ensure payments are reconciled properly, however this has delayed the issuing of draft and final licences for some agents.

The new applications system has proved difficult at times. Some areas were not operating smoothly. The system was quickly implemented, leaving minimal time to test it end-to-end. However, officers have persevered. They have made improvements alongside the software provider. This has assisted application processing, and it is expected the processing time will decrease per application in the following years.

The council holds Landlord Information forum sessions and has information on the website. Forum attendees requested more property standards information. They expressed difficulty finding it on the website. The Council acknowledge the need to provide more guidance to landlords about the inspection process and the expected standards in licensed properties. This is challenging due to the lack of specific regulations compared with HMO licensing. However, it is hoped that progress can be made in this area in year 2 of the scheme. The Councils' new website will improve landlords' ability to find information.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of selective licensing in the city has been challenging. The number of applications has exceeded the predictions. This is often the case when licensing schemes are introduced. Year 2 will focus on issuing the remaining licences and reducing application

processing times. The remainder of the scheme will focus on enforcement work to ensure the objective of the scheme, by removing housing hazards from privately rented homes, is met.

## Monitoring data

### Application Processing and Administration

Number of applications received:

Licence Type	New	Temporary Exemption
Q1(Sep- Nov)	5353	37
Q2 (Dec-Feb)	4000	29
Q3 (Mar-May)	755	16
Q4 (Jun-Aug)	788	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>10896</b>	<b>88</b>

Licences by ward:

Ward	Applications	Licence issued
Osney And St. Thomas	779	112
Cotteslowe And Sunnymead	628	104
Headington	623	115
Temple Cowley	619	106
Summertown	576	99
Hinksey Park	543	97
Carfax And Jericho	531	79
Cowley	529	118
Quarry And Risinghurst	500	114
Walton Manor	491	65
St Clement's	475	86
St Mary's	467	76
Marston	465	97
Littlemore	459	109
Donnington	408	94
Headington Hill And Northway	392	98
Barton And Sandhills	381	92
Rose Hill And Iffley	379	98
Churchill	371	75
Lye Valley	368	82
Wolvercote	366	84
Northfield Brook	254	58
Blackbird Leys	212	71
Holywell	76	5
	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,896</b>	<b>2,138</b>

**Number of draft licences issued**

Category	Early Bird	Accreditation	Standard	Total	Temporary Exemptions
<b>Q1(Sep-Nov)</b>	147	109	25	<b>281</b>	28
<b>Q2 (Dec-Feb)</b>	233	271	56	<b>560</b>	26
<b>Q3 (Mar-May)</b>	260	282	38	<b>580</b>	11
<b>Q4 (Jun-Aug)</b>	598	523	134	<b>1255</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1238</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>2676</b>	<b>66</b>

**Service Requests & Inspections**

Period	Number of service requests received	Number of Suspected unlicensed cases	Number of HHSRS inspections
<b>Q1(Sep-Nov)</b>	62	0	28
<b>Q2 (Dec-Feb)</b>	76	0	44
<b>Q3 (Mar-May)</b>	81	53	41
<b>Q4 (Jun-Aug)</b>	70	30	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>142</b>

**Housing Act notices served**

Type of Notice	Number of properties
Emergency Remedial Action	1
Hazard Awareness Notice Category 1 hazard	7
Hazard Awareness Notice Category 2 hazard	7
Improvement Notice Category 1 &2 hazards	6
Prohibition Order – Category 1 hazard	6
Prohibition Order – Category 2 hazard	3



**To:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Date:** 07 March 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Housing Services  
**Title of Report:** Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code – Self-Assessment 2024

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To inform Panel Members on the Council’s landlord function self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b>	
1. <b>Note and comment on</b> the self-assessment and <b>agree</b> any recommendations.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code – Self-Assessment 2024

## Introduction and background

1. The Housing Ombudsman Service was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and from April 2013 it took over responsibility for all new complaints about social housing. This includes complaints about the Council’s relationship as landlord to our tenants or leaseholders. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman cover complaints that do not relate to the landlord function.
2. The Housing Ombudsman launched its Complaint Handling Code in July 2020 and updated and strengthened the code in April 2022. Part of the code requires landlords to complete a self-assessment against the requirements of the code. The requirements of the code and the self-assessment have increased significantly since the code was first launched.

3. In October 2023, the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code was presented to this committee.
4. In autumn 2023, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman each launched a consultation on having a single Complaint Handling Code for local government, covering housing and non-housing functions. Although the changes for the Council as a whole are quite significant, in terms of the housing landlord function that the Housing Ombudsman covers, there are only five, relatively minor clarifications or changes.
5. At the time of writing, the changes to the Complaint Handling Code have not yet been confirmed, although they are expected to be in place by 01 April 2024. As such, to remain compliant from a housing landlord function perspective, it is necessary to carry out a further self-assessment against the updated code and to have reported it to this committee.
6. This report introduces the Council's landlord function Self-Assessment 2024 against the Housing Ombudsman's proposed Complaint Handling Code.
7. Note that the Council will in due course need to provide a self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for the whole Council. This self-assessment does not seek to represent a self-assessment against the whole Council.

### **The Self-Assessment**

8. The updated self-assessment is grouped in nine themes. All elements are now mandatory requirements. The nine themes are:
  - Definition of a complaint
  - Exclusions
  - Accessibility and awareness
  - Complaint handling staff
  - Complaint handling principles
  - Complaint handling process
  - Complaints stages
  - Putting things right
  - Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

### **Commentary Against the Code**

9. The commentary on the Self-Assessment sets out the views relating to the landlord function only. The landlord function broadly meets the requirements of the Code, except where the commentary is shown in red: sections 8.1 & 8.2 and sections 9.3 to 9.8.
10. The actions set out in these sections show how full compliance with each element will be achieved. While we can demonstrate how the landlord function meets the requirements, some corporate activity is also required to provide full assurance.

## Next Steps

11. The self-assessment for the housing landlord function will be reviewed in early 2025.

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**Background Papers:** None

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### Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

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Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i></p>	Yes	<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>.</p>	<p>This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>What is a complaint?</u> specifies:</p> <p><i>‘A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its staff, or those acting on behalf of the Council, affecting an individual citizen or group of citizens.’</i></p>
1.3	<p>A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.</p>	Yes	<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>.</p>	<p>Our residents do not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treat as such. This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.</p> <p>Section titled <u>Who can make a complaint</u> specifies:</p> <p><i>‘The Council will accept complaints from anyone who has used or been affected by a service provided by or on behalf of the Council. The</i></p>

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				<i>Council will also accept complaints from</i>
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	<p>This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. section titled '<i>What is a complaint?</i>' it states:</p> <p><i>'Complaints and service requests can be closely related. The initial reporting of a fault will normally be treated as a service request and the Council will seek to resolve the issue outside of this procedure in the first instance. When assessing whether to treat a contact as a complaint or a service request each case will be considered on its individual merits and consideration may be given to the following factors'</i></p> <p>As a landlord we do recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. We follow the Housing Ombudsman definition on this matter.</p>
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>What is a complaint?</u>

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	<p>request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.</p>			<p>specifies:</p> <p><i>When assessing whether to treat a contact as a complaint or a service request each case will be considered on its individual merits and consideration may be given to the following factors. This list is not exhaustive:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Whether the customer has been made aware of the complaints procedure and has identified their contact as being a complaint.</i></li> <li>• <i>What the expression of dissatisfaction is about.</i></li> <li>• <i>The tone of the correspondence.</i></li> <li>• <i>What the customer would like to happen next.</i></li> <li>• <b><i>Whether the matter has already been treated as a service request.</i></b></li> </ul>
<p>1.6</p>	<p>An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Questions 22 of the 2023 STAR Survey was</p>	<p>We will ensure that we provide information on how to make a complaint when we carry and</p>



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	<p>defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.</p>		<p><i>'Oxford City Council changed their complaints procedure. You can make a complaint by phoning The Council, writing to customer services or filling in the online customer feedback form. Were you aware of how to make a complaint before today?'</i></p>	<p>included this in the autumn 2023 STAR survey.</p> <p>We also gather real-time transactional satisfaction performance on completion of repairs &amp; gas servicing, with direct interventions by team leaders/planners where satisfaction is less than required.</p>
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Section 2: Exclusions

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Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes		As a landlord we do accept, log, investigate and respond to all complaints.
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.</li> <li>• Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.</li> <li>• Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.</li> </ul>	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	<p>This is set out in our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.</p> <p>Section titled <u>What will not be treated as a complaint under this procedure</u></p>

2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes		As a landlord we do accept, log, investigate and respond to all complaints.
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes		To date we have had no situation whereby we have not accepted a complaint.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>What will not be treated as a complaint under this procedure?</u>

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section 'Reasonable Adjustments' specifies:  <i>'Anyone is welcome to make a comment. Compliment or complaint and the Council is committed to treating everyone fairly. If a complainant requires any particular assistance the Council will tailor made this service to the complainants needs. This may include, for example, the provision of information in alternative formats (e.g. large print), the use of a language service, or communication through a representative'.</i>
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments,</a>	This is defined within our

	<p>complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.</p>		<p><a href="#">Compliments and Complaints procedure.</a></p>	<p>Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled. <u>How to make a comment, compliment or complaint?</u></p> <p>provides detail on how to raise a complaint via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone</li> <li>• Online form</li> <li>• In person</li> <li>• In writing (to our Town Hall)</li> <li>• By email</li> <li>• Via a Councillor or MP</li> </ul> <p><u>The Council’s Tenant Portal is due to go live in autumn 2023, with the functionality for tenants to raise a complaint, comment or compliment.</u></p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.</a></p> <p>Our <a href="#">Landlord Complaints</a> webpage.</p>	<p>By simply typing the word ‘complaint’ with in the search bar of <a href="http://www.oxford.gov.uk">www.oxford.gov.uk</a> returns the necessary webpage on complaints that residents need.</p>

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				We also have a Landlord Complaints webpage.
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.  The procedure details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of stages involved.</li> <li>• What occurs at each stage.</li> <li>• The timeframes of each stage.</li> </ul>
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section <u><i>Ombudsman</i></u>
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes		Residents have the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint or to accompany them at any meeting.
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	Contact information for the Housing Ombudsman is included in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 written responses to residents.

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				This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section <u>Ombudsman</u>
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**Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff**

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Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes		<p>Oxford City Council employed a Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer in October 2022.</p> <p>The officer is assigned to take responsibility of landlord related complaints.</p> <p>Oxford City Council employed a Customer Care &amp; Complaints Manager in February 2023.</p>
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		<p>Our Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer make contact with the complainant once it has been logged, to better understand the complaint and to seek a fair and balance resolution from the outcome. The officer will also make reference to the Housing Ombudsman at this stage and establish if any</p>



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				reasonable adjustments need to be made.
65	4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	<p>The Customer Care &amp; Complaints Manager and Customer Care and Complaints Officer does have appropriate skills, experience and training.</p> <p>Our Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer makes contact with the complainant once it has been logged, to better understand the complaint and to seek a fair and balance resolution from the outcome. The officer will also make reference to the Housing Ombudsman at this stage and establish if any reasonable adjustments need to be made.</p>

### Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments</a> .	Oxford City Council has a

	place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.		<a href="#">Compliments and Complaints procedure.</a>  Our <a href="#">Landlord Complaints</a> webpage.	single Complaints Procedure that is compliant with the Code.
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.</a>	Every effort is made to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, having due regard to the complexity of the case and any urgent issues are dealt with in a timely manner, where necessary, before the complaint response is sent out.  We only have a two stages process. This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>How your complaints will be dealt with</u>
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.</a>	We only have a two-stage process. This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.

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				Section titled <u>How your complaints will be dealt with</u>
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	ODS <a href="#">website</a>	ODS (Oxford Direct Services) are a subsidiary company of Oxford City Council. They also only have a two-stage process.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	ODS <a href="#">website</a>	ODS (Oxford Direct Services) are a subsidiary company of Oxford City Council. They also only have a two-stage process and are compliant with the Code.  ODS publish monthly reports of their complaints handling to the landlord.
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for	Yes		We first make contact by the complaint's preferred methods of contact and send an acknowledgement letter containing the clarification of the complainant's Stage 2 complaint.

	clarification.			
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes		Written acknowledgements contain a summary of the issues being complained about and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The initial contact between the Complaint Officer and the tenant also confirms the position.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;</li> <li>b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;</li> <li>c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</li> <li>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</li> </ul>	Yes		<p>Having recruited a Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer, this ensures that all complainants are treated in an unbiased fashion when contact is made.</p> <p>The Investigation Officer make contact with the compliant to clarify the complaint. They investigate all information provided by the resident and take and audit of internal services to verify the situation.</p> <p>We take an impartial view and treat every compliant on it's own merits.</p> <p>The Customer Care &amp;</p>

				Complaints Officer also carries out a quality check on the majority of letter written by the Investigation Officer to ensure these principles are followed.
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes		<p>The Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer makes contact with the complainant to discuss an extension. Where this is agreed, this is confirmed in writing.</p> <p>We also contact the customer and discuss frequency and preferred communication methods.</p>
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	<p>This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section 'Reasonable Adjustments' specifies:</p> <p><i>'Anyone is welcome to make a comment. Compliment or complaint and the Council is committed to treating everyone fairly. If a complainant requires any</i></p>

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				<i>particular assistance the Council will tailor made this service to the complainants needs. This may include, for example, the provision of information in alternative formats (e.g. large print), the use of a language service, or communication through a representative’.</i>
70	5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .  Where a complaint is not upheld, we clearly advise the customer how that outcome has been reached and offer them an opportunity to appeal or discuss further as part of our complaint response letter.  In our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure, we have set out the circumstances where we may reasonably refuse to escalate a complaint.
	5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation	Yes	A complaints system/log is in place to manage landlord complaints. The log keeps clear audit trail of correspondents between the complainant and landlord. The complaints system/log

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	such as reports or surveys.			does not include any additional stages outside of the required two stage process.
71	5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>.</p> <p>We recognise where there are failings and manage the expectation of the complainants and what we are then able to deliver. Remedies include apologies, compensation, ex-gratia payments or a gesture e.g., charitable contribution</p> <p>This is defined within our online Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>Remedy</u> and specified:</p> <p>If it is identified during the complaints process that a fault by the Council has directly caused personal injustice the Council will seek to offer a remedy that is proportionate and reasonable in view of the</p>

				<p>circumstances of the situation. This may include, for example, offering an apology, reviewing processes and procedures, or offering to compensate any financial loss resulting directly from the Council's actions.</p> <p>We take into account the quantifiable losses to the complaint, which includes the time and trouble it has taken for them to complain when awarding compensation.</p> <p>We will also consider any statutory payments such as Home Loss, Right to Repair etc.</p>
5.14	<p>Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.</p>		<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>.</p>	<p>This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>Reasonable and Unreasonable Behaviour</u></p> <p>And section titled <u>Manage</u></p>



				<p><u>unreasonable behaviour and vexatious complaints</u></p> <p>We also have Vexatious Guidance.</p>
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes		If it is necessary to restrict contact with a resident, we will have due regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 our Equality Duty, the protected characteristics of the resident and any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

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Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the	Yes		Every effort is made to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, having due regard to the complexity of the case and any urgent issues are dealt with in a timely manner, where necessary, before the complaint response is sent out

	resident.			
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.	Yes		Written acknowledgements is provided within five working days and contain a summary of the issues being complained about and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The initial contact between the Complaint Officer and the tenant also confirms the position.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>How your complaints will be dealt with</u>
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes		The Customer Care & Complaints Officer makes contact with the complainant to discuss an extension. Where this is agreed, this is confirmed in writing.
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes		When an extension occurs, the Customer Care & Complaints Officer also provides the complainant the Housing Ombudsman

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				<p>details. Our letter response also includes the Housing Ombudsman details.</p>
6.6	<p>A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.</p>	Yes		<p>Written complaint responses are sent to the resident when the answer to complaint is known. Where there are any outstanding actions, these are listed within the written response with target dates.</p> <p>The Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer logs any outstanding actions and tracks these to completion by working with the relevant service area.</p>
6.7	<p>Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.</p>	Yes		<p>As a landlord our complaints responses do address all points raised and provide clear reasons for the decisions.</p>
6.8	<p>Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response</p>	Yes		<p>Where there is a live complaint, customers can also raise multiple requests during the process of a complaint if they are related, prior to the investigation starting. Where a complainant</p>

	has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.			requested to add unrelated issue, it is first reviewed on whether it is a service request, or alternatively advised to register a new Stage 1 complaint.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the complaint stage;</li> <li>b. the complaint definition;</li> <li>c. the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.</li> </ul>	Yes		We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman's template response letters, incorporating the requirements to ensure compliance.

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes		If the complainant is not satisfied by the response, then they are able to escalate the complaint to the second and final stage.

6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes		Written acknowledgements if provided within five working days and contains a summary of the issues being escalated and the outcomes the resident is seeking. Further contact between the Complaint Officer and the tenant also confirms the position.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes		Our Stage 1 letter response does not require the complainant to explain their reasons for requesting a Stage 2. It states <i>'If you would like to take your complaint to Stage 2, please advise us. We will then make every effort to better understand the reasons for your ongoing dissatisfaction, either in email, letter or phone call.'</i>
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a> .	This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>How your complaints will be dealt with</u> specifies:

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				<p><i>Our stage 2 complaints are responded to by a Head of Service.</i></p>
6.14	<p>Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.</p>	Yes		<p>Our stage 2 complaints are responded to within the 20 working days, although we aim to provide the response in as short a timeframe as possible, following a thorough investigation by the Head of Service.</p> <p>Where there are exceptional circumstances and it is not possible to provide a response within 20 working days, we will inform the resident and provide a clear timeframe and explanation as to why.</p>
6.15	<p>Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.</p>	Yes		<p>The Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer makes contact with the complainant to discuss an extension. Where this is agreed, this is confirmed in writing.</p>
6.16	<p>When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these</p>	Yes		<p>When an extension occurs, the Customer Care &amp;</p>

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	timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.			Complaints Officer also provides the complainant the Housing Ombudsman details.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes		Written complaint responses are sent to the resident when the answer to complaint is known. Where there are any outstanding actions, these are listed within the written response with target dates.  The Customer Care & Complaints Officer logs any outstanding actions and tracks these to completion by working with the relevant service area.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes		As a landlord our complaints responses do address all points raised and provide clear reasons for the decisions.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made;	Yes		We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman's template response letters, incorporating the requirements to ensure compliance. We provide details of how the resident can escalate the matter to

	<p>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</p> <p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</p>			the Housing Ombudsman.
6.20	<p>Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.</p>	Yes	<p>Our online <a href="#">Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure</a>.</p>	<p>This is defined within our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Section titled <u>How your complaints will be dealt with</u> specifies:</p> <p><i>Our stage 2 complaints are responded to by a Head of Service.</i></p>

**Section 7: Putting things right**

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologising;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things</li> </ul>	Yes		<p>Oxford City Council's complaints procedure is in place to effectively resolve disputes, by identifying what has gone wrong and the intended actions to put things right.</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> <li>• Changing policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>			<p>This is evident from the investigating officer managing the next steps and outcomes until the complaint is fully resolved. The Service area affected where relevant will make the appropriate service improvements.</p>	
81	7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes		<p>We recognise where there are failings and manage the expectation of the complainants and what we are then able to deliver. Remedies include apologies, compensation, ex-gratia payments or a gesture e.g., charitable contribution</p>
	7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes		<p>From the conclusion of the investigation remedies are identified where appropriate in agreement with the complainant and any remedies proposed are monitored through to completion.</p>
	7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman	Yes		<p>As good practice we refer to the Housing Ombudsman</p>

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	when deciding on appropriate remedies.			guidance when deciding on appropriate remedies.
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Section 8: Putting things right

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Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.</li> <li>b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord’s complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;</li> <li>c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</li> <li>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</li> <li>e. any annual report about the landlord’s performance from the Ombudsman; and</li> <li>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</li> </ul>	No		

<p>8.2</p>	<p>The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord’s governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its <b>website relating to complaints</b>. The governing body’s response to the report must be published alongside this.</p>	<p>No</p>		<p>8.1 &amp; 8.2 Complaint handling performance is reported to the Housing and Homelessness Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee) which in turn is reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel and the Council. <b>The Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 will incorporate all of the required elements and will be published both on the Committee pages of the Council’s website and on the Housing Complaints pages. This self-assessment will be updated to reflect this measure on publication of the Annual Complaints Report and the self-assessment.</b></p>
<p>8.3</p>	<p>Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>As a landlord, we will commit to carrying out a detailed annual self-assessment against to code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with the requirements.</p>
<p>8.4</p>	<p>Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>As a landlord, we will commit to carrying out a review and update of our</p>

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				self-assessment if requested by the Ombudsman.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes		If this situation did occur and we were unable to comply with the Code, then we would be committed to inform the Ombudsman and the affected complainants and publish this on our website with the appropriate timescales for the reconvening of the service.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes		<p>We do look beyond the circumstances of the complainant and identify the complaint and how these impacts on residents as a whole.</p> <p>Appreciative enquiries and customer journey mapping has been carried out in areas where complaints have been raised and service failings have been identified.</p>
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes		<p>As a landlord we recognise the positive impact complaints have on future service delivery, which is supported through the investigation process. Appreciative enquiries and customer journey mapping has been carried out in areas where complaints have been raised.</p>

				Learning from complaints is shared across service areas and in the example of day-to-day repairs, any learning is also shared with operatives through “toolbox talks.”
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents’ panels, staff and relevant committees.	No		<p>The Annual Report 2023 was published in September 2023 and provides learning from complaints. Further information on complaints is provided in the tenant newsletter.</p> <p>Complaints performance and learning is reported to the Housing &amp; Homeless Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee).</p> <p>Planned activity will provide that learning and improvements are publicised on the Council’s website. This will provide the assurance required to meet element 9.3</p>
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for	Part		The Customer Care and Complaints Manager for the

	<p>their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.</p>			<p>landlord function was appointed in February 2024 and has accountability for complaints handling, as well as assessing any themes or trends to identify potential system issues.</p> <p>There will be a need for a corporate person to be accountable for the Council as a whole, likely to be at an Executive level. Once this person is appointed, compliance with element 9.4 will be achieved.</p>
9.5	<p>In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').</p>	TBC		<p>An elected member of the Cabinet will need to be appointed to have overall responsibility for complaint handling across the whole Council, not just the landlord function. Once this person is appointed, compliance with element 9.5 will be achieved.</p>
9.6	<p>The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives</p>	TBC		<p>Complaint handling performance is reported to</p>



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	regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.			<p>the Housing and Homelessness Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee) which in turn is reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel and the Council.</p> <p>Once the MRC is appointed, the remit will involve the information being provided to the appropriate committee covering complaints across the whole Council.</p>
9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;</li> <li>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;</li> <li>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</li> <li>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</li> </ul>	TBC		<p>The Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 will incorporate all of the required elements and will be published both on the Committee pages of the Council's website and on the Housing Complaints pages. This self-assessment will be updated to reflect this measure on publication of the Annual Complaints Report and the self assessment.</p>
9.8	Landlords must have a standard	TBC		As a landlord we work

	<p>objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</li> <li>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</li> <li>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</li> </ul>			<p>collaboratively with other services and this is supported by having a Customer Care &amp; Complaints Officer and a Customer Care &amp; Complaints Manager, who ensures positive cooperation between teams and service areas.</p> <p>The corporate complaints page will need to be updated to reflect the standard objectives in 9.8</p>
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# Oxford City Council TSM Survey

<sup>91</sup>  
2023 Report  
November 2023  
Prepared by: Acuity Research & Practice

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# Introduction

Oxford City Council (Oxford CC) own or manage approximately 8,000 properties around the city. Low cost rental accommodation (LCRA) tenants form the majority of residents, however, there are a small number of shared ownership (LCHO) residents.

Acuity has been commissioned to undertake an annual independent satisfaction survey of the residents of Oxford CC, to collect data on their opinions of, and attitudes towards, their landlord and the services provided.

This survey was designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), which became mandatory to collect from April 2023 and are due to be reported for the first-time next year.

This one-off survey for Oxford City Council (Oxford CC) is RSH compliant, using the appropriate Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The survey is designed to collect the views of approximately 950 residents a year, proportionally sampled by tenure, ward and age.

This report presents an analysis of the results based on the 960 responses for 2023 (carried out in October and November). This includes benchmarking of the new TSM questions against other Acuity clients, and analysis to reveal what is driving satisfaction at Oxford CC.

The survey was conducted by telephone and is confidential. The results are sent back to Oxford CC anonymised unless residents give their permission to be identified – 87% of residents did give permission to share their responses with their details attached and 95% of these residents are happy for Oxford CC to contact them to discuss any issues they raised.

The aim of this survey is to provide data on residents' satisfaction, which will allow Oxford CC to:

- Provide information on residents' perceptions of current services
- Compare the results with previous surveys, where possible
- Compare the results with other landlords (where appropriate)
- Inform decisions regarding future service development
- Report to the regulator.

For the overall results, Acuity, Housemark and the Regulator of Social Housing recommend that landlords with under 10,000 properties achieve a sampling error of at least  $\pm 4\%$  at the 95% confidence level. A total of 960 responses were received in 2023, which is high enough to conclude that the findings are accurate to within  $\pm 3.0\%$ .

The majority of figures throughout the report show the results as percentages. The percentages are rounded up or down from one decimal place to the nearest whole number, and for this reason, may not in all cases add up to 100%. Rounding can also cause percentages described in the supporting text to differ from the percentages in the charts by 1% when two percentages are added together.



# 78%















## Overall Satisfaction

In 2023, 78% of residents are satisfied with the overall service provided by Oxford CC. A similar percentage of residents that responded to the survey are satisfied that their homes are well maintained (78%), with the overall repairs and maintenance service (78%) and that Oxford CC is easy to deal with (77%).

There are even higher satisfaction rates for the repairs service over the last 12 months (83%), tenants being treated fairly and with respect (82%), the provision of a safe home (82%), the time taken to complete the last repair (81%) and tenants being kept informed (80%).

However, there is scope for improvement in some areas, such as how Oxford CC deals with anti-social behaviour (67%) and the handling of complaints (33%). Although these two aspects of service are often among the lowest-performing metrics for social landlords (see benchmarking pages 32 to 33).

# Key Metrics Summary 2023

	<b>78%</b> Well maintained home		<b>71%</b> Positive contribution to neighbourhood
	<b>82%</b> Safe home		<b>67%</b> Anti-social behaviour
	<b>68%</b> Safety & security (high-rise)		<b>77%</b> Easy to deal with
	<b>83%</b> Repairs - Last 12 months		<b>66%</b> Listens & acts
	<b>81%</b> Time taken - Last repair		<b>80%</b> Keeps you informed
	<b>78%</b> Repairs - Overall satisfaction		<b>82%</b> Treats fairly & with respect
	<b>73%</b> Communal areas clean & well maintained		<b>33%</b> Complaints handling

# National Context

As will be shown throughout this report satisfaction has generally decreased slightly since the previous survey. However, is this to do with Oxford CC's performance or other factors?

When considering the survey results, it is important that the national context and external factors should also be taken into account. For example:

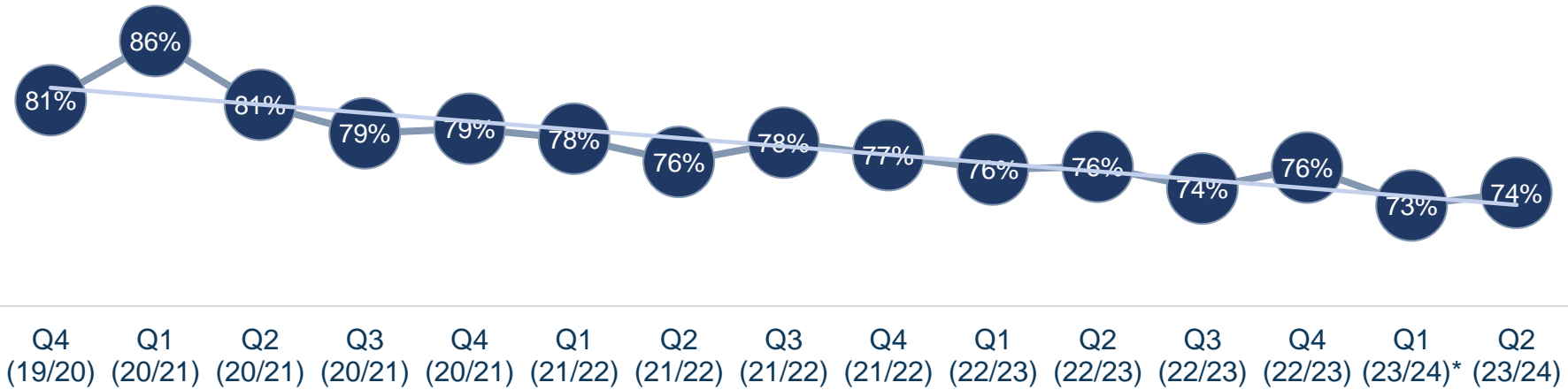
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Government and Political Changes
- Uncertainty about the Future
- Brexit and the Economy

Satisfaction is based on perception rather than specific values so can be affected by these factors and how positive people feel about their lives. Factors such as the pandemic also altered the way social landlords operate, perhaps making them less accessible and responsive.

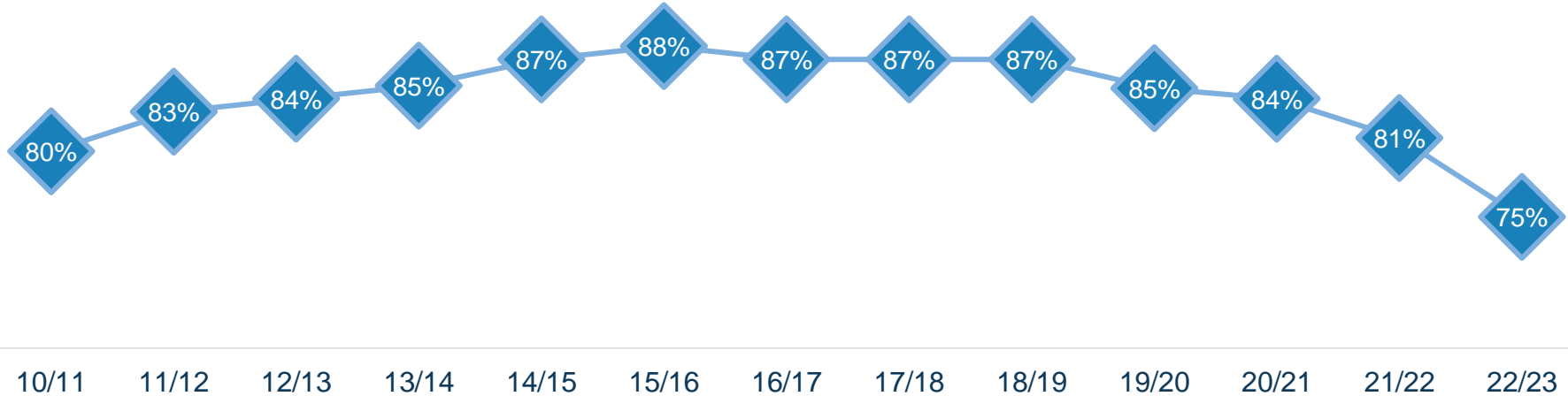
Despite all the current challenges facing the sector, Oxford CC has managed to achieve high levels of satisfaction with the overall services they provide (78%), rewarding their efforts.

The top graph demonstrates how overall satisfaction has changed over time for Acuity's clients (tracker only). The trend line is downward over the last few years. The lower chart shows the results from Housemark members.

**Overall Services (Acuity Clients)**



**Satisfaction with services provided (NHF/Housemark median - general needs)**



\*LCRA only onwards



# Overall Satisfaction





# Overall Satisfaction

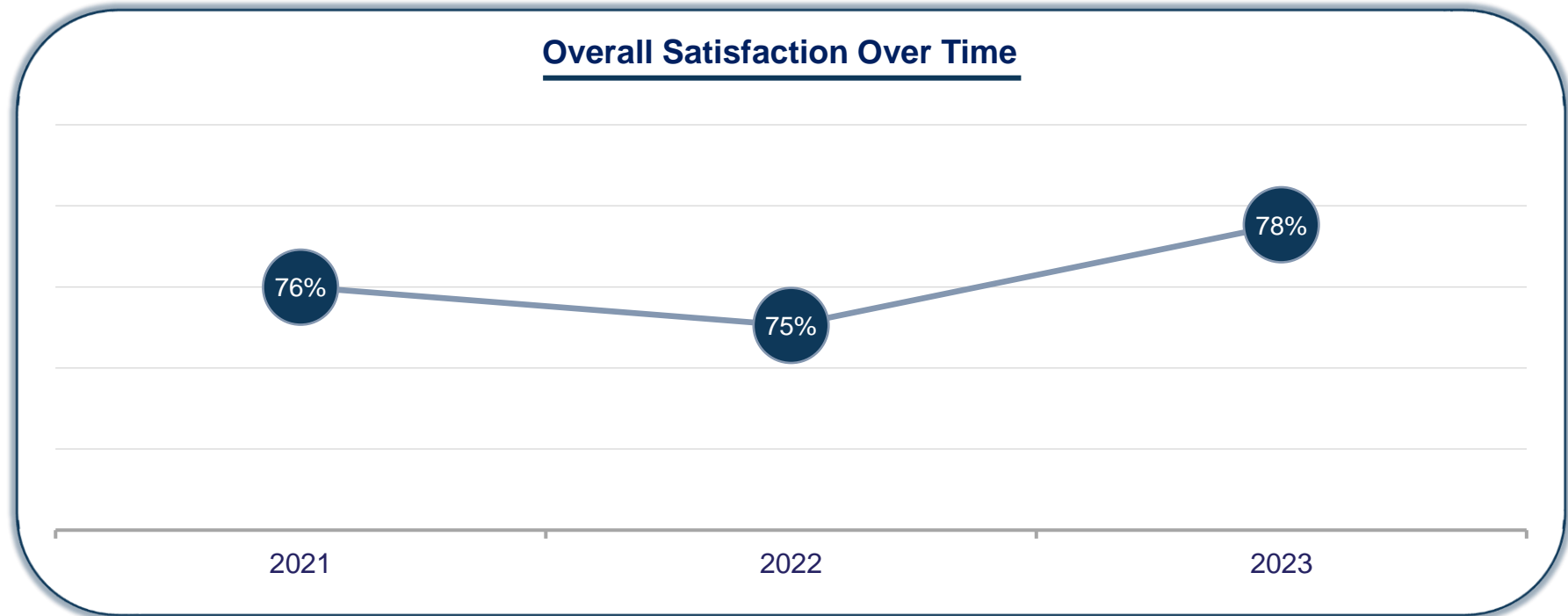
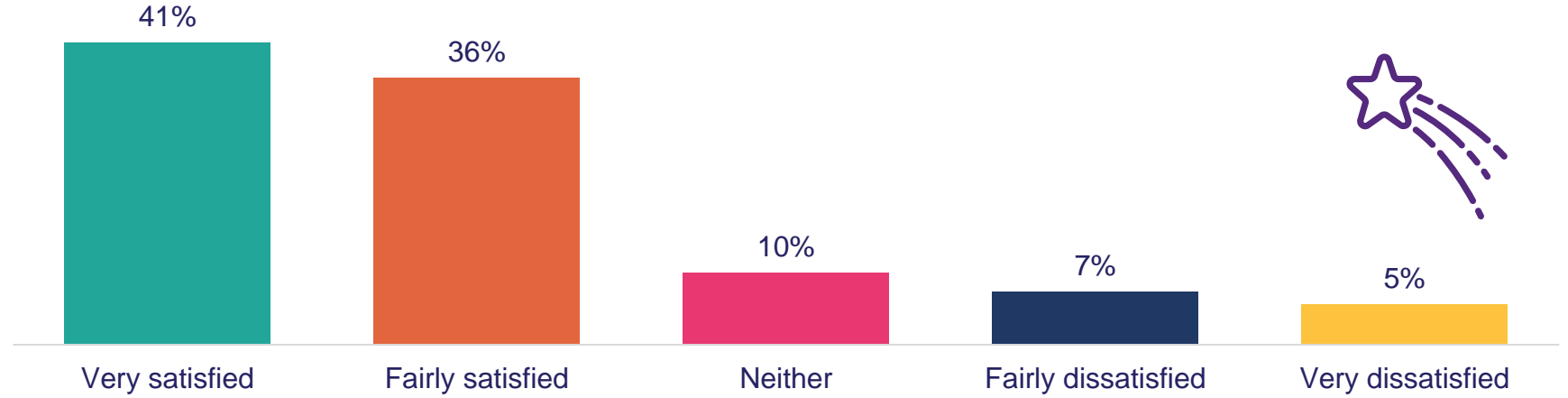
Residents were asked, “Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Oxford City Council?” This is the key metric in any tenant perception survey.

Around eight out of ten residents are satisfied (78%), with slightly more very satisfied (41%) than fairly satisfied (36%).

However, 13% of residents are dissatisfied with the overall service provided, with the remaining 10% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The overall satisfaction rating has improved by 3 percentage points, from last year’s survey results, and by 2 percentage points since 2021. This is positive, as during this time, several external factors have been impacting how landlords can operate (see page 5).

The ‘Understanding Satisfaction’ section of this report, further analyses the results by a range of different groups, including age, ethnicity, tenure and ward.





# Keeping Properties in Good Repair



# Keeping Properties in Good Repair

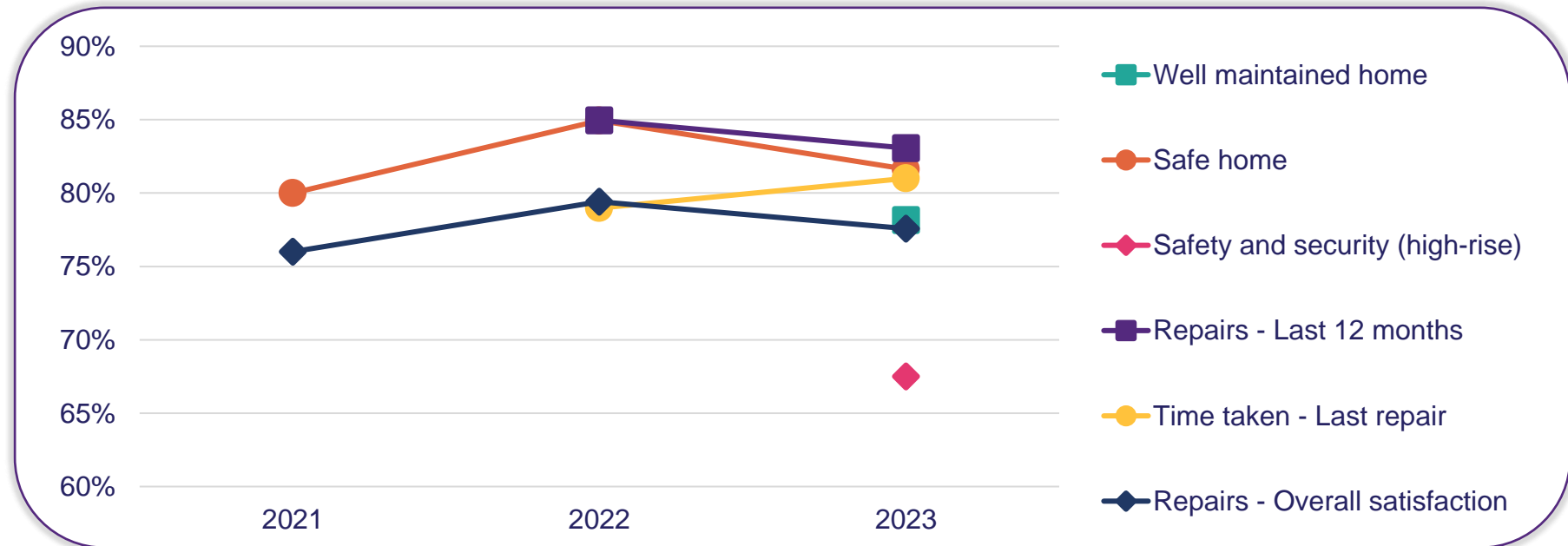
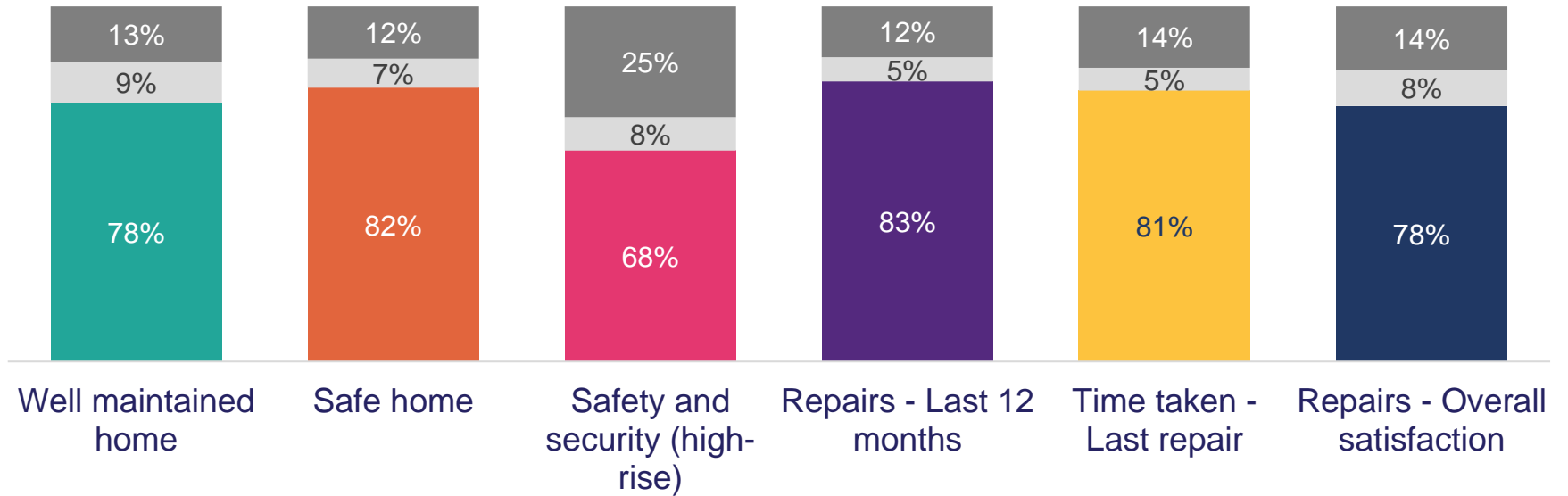
The TSMs now split out satisfaction with the home into two questions, focusing on its safety and its maintenance. More residents are satisfied that their homes are safe (82%) than well maintained (78%), a common pattern in surveys of this kind.

In addition to the general question about their home's safety, residents of high-rise blocks were asked how satisfied they are with the safety and security of their block. Two-thirds of residents are satisfied (68%), however, a quarter are dissatisfied (25%).

Residents were also asked about the repairs service, and 66% said they had a repair carried out to their home in the last 12 months. Of these residents, 83% are satisfied with the overall repairs service during this period, with a similar percentage satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair (81%).

Marginally fewer residents are satisfied with the way Oxford CC deals with repairs and maintenance generally (78%) – a question asked of all residents regardless of whether they had a repair carried out in the last 12 months.

Of the metrics recorded in last year's survey, most have fallen slightly in 2023, however, there has been a slight increase in satisfaction with the time taken to complete the last repair (up 2%).



\*Safe home changed from "safe and secure" to "well maintained and safe" in 2022 and to just "safe" in 2023.

# Comments – Home or Communal Areas

Residents not satisfied with their homes or communal areas were asked to provide more information and what could be done to improve this. Of these residents, 288 responded, around a third of the total number of residents surveyed.

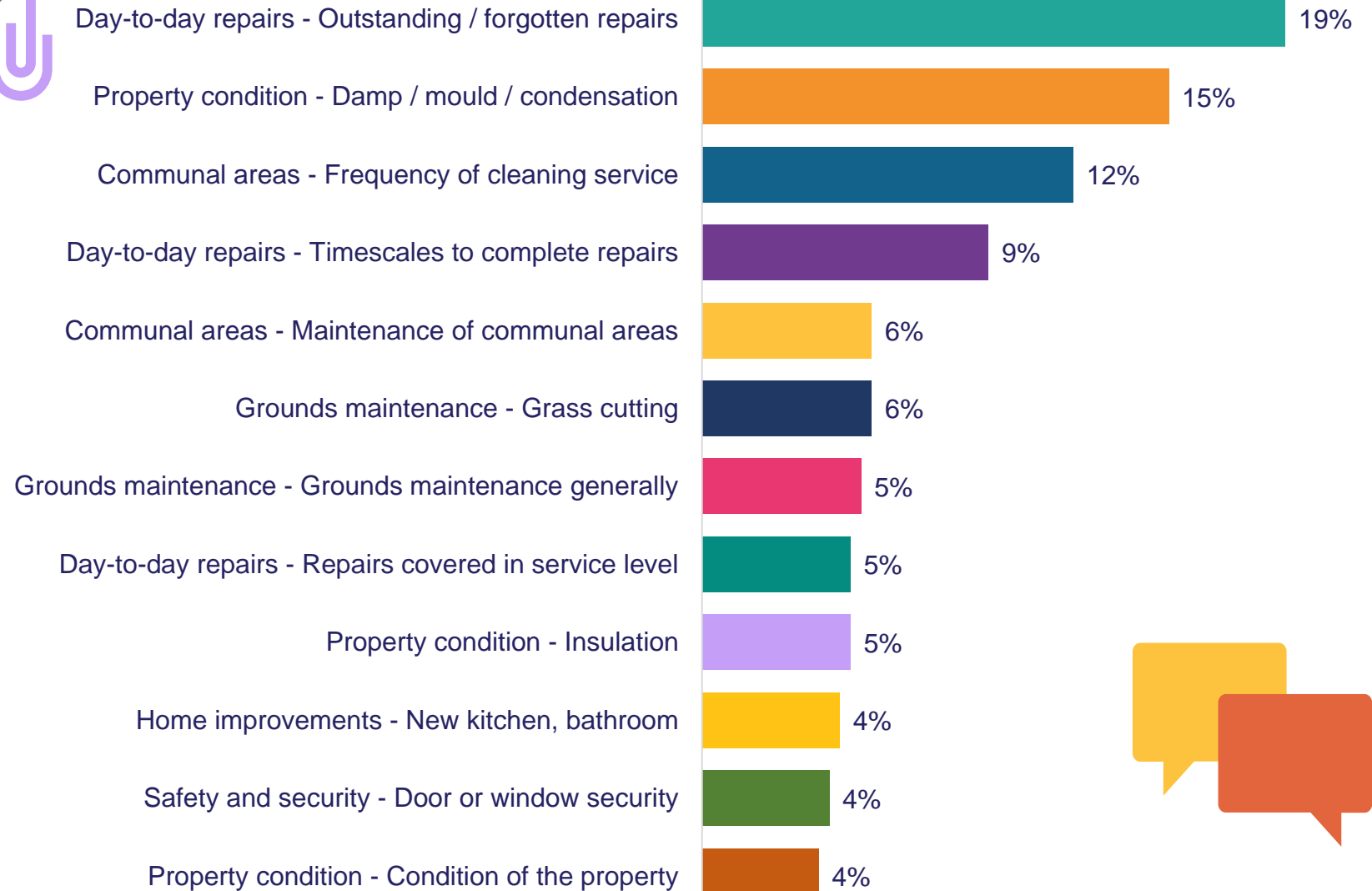
Residents most frequently referred to outstanding or forgotten repairs (19%), with the time taken to complete repairs also often mentioned (9%).

In addition, 15% of the residents mentioned problems with damp, mould or condensation in their homes. It is important that these issues are dealt with as a matter of urgency to ensure that the health of residents is not affected, and the condition of properties does not deteriorate any further.

The maintenance and cleanliness of communal areas is clearly, important to many, and the frequency of the cleaning service is highlighted for improvement by 12% of the residents.

Grounds maintenance and in particular grass cutting, are also areas of concern, as are the condition of properties, their security and home improvements.

To provide further insight into residents' concerns, a selection of the comments received are shown on the following page.



Number of respondents: 288

# Home or Communal Areas – Comments

## Day-to-day repairs: Outstanding repairs and timescales

*"I have had a long list of repairs, and they are only just being done now (reported 14 years ago.)"*

*"If something goes wrong it takes a while to fix it. I have gone without heating a week on end."*

*"The screed is breaking and cracking up under the tiles they took up. I mentioned this to them probably a year and a half ago."*

*"I have called them about the hole in the wall a year ago, but I am still waiting."*

*"Just the speed of the work that can be done or carried out. Recently we've had a hole in our roof. It's quite a bit of time."*

*"Some of the repairs have been a problem namely the length of time to complete them and there is no follow-up to the jobs. A couple of repairs in the last couple months they haven't completed, and I have had to chase them up, or they have closed the job and I have had to go through the reporting process again which causes further delays."*

## Property condition: Damp and mould

*"Because of the damp and mould issues, I have been sleeping on the sofa for 11 months. I ring up every week and complain. People visit and look and then do nothing for months. They miss deadlines constantly. It's only when I got Citizens Advice involved that they started to take action."*

*"I have mould/damp in the living room/bedrooms/toilet and cracks on the walls."*

*"The property suffers from damp. This was reported 3 years ago. My husband has breathing difficulties. No surveyor has come to inspect the damp since we reported it."*

*"I have had mould for the past 7 seven years and nothing has been done about it."*

*"Getting mould here now as it's a Dutch house with guttering at the bottom of the house and I've got a 2-year-old in the property."*

*"I have mould in the hallway, they said they would do something, but they haven't."*

## Communal areas: Cleanliness and maintenance

*"The communal areas constantly being damaged and littered and no one does anything about it."*

*"They wash the concrete steps and communal area once a week with dirty water."*

*"Communal area is not clean every time I go out there's human faeces, cat and dog poo every entrance and as soon as I walk out the door where there is turn there's human faeces."*

*"The communal areas are not clean at all, yesterday I was going outside, and I saw a rat."*

*"The communal areas are not cleaned often enough."*

*"It is not always clean or maintained (the communal areas). It would be good if they could do a deep clean of internal areas."*

*"It takes many times of calling for them to come and sort out the amount of rubbish in the communal area and then they don't take it all away anyway."*

## Grounds maintenance

*"Inside is kept clean but they never seem to do the gardening properly outside. They used to cut down the hedges twice a year but now it is only once a year, and they are very overgrown with brambles everywhere. We used to have a very good window cleaner but recently they have a new company who are not doing the job properly."*

*"The gardens and outside areas should be kept clean and tidy, and the grass mowed more regularly than twice a year, it's not enough and doesn't keep the area tidy."*

*"Even cutting the grass they don't do around the washing lines and there's no care taken to do it properly, there are weeds all by the side of the building, they're never taken up."*

*"It's because they tried passing this new law where they have to let the grass areas grow for wildlife areas so they're only cutting the areas once a year now and with all the kids here, my daughter came in one day and her legs looked like human dart board because of all the bugs and rubbish."*

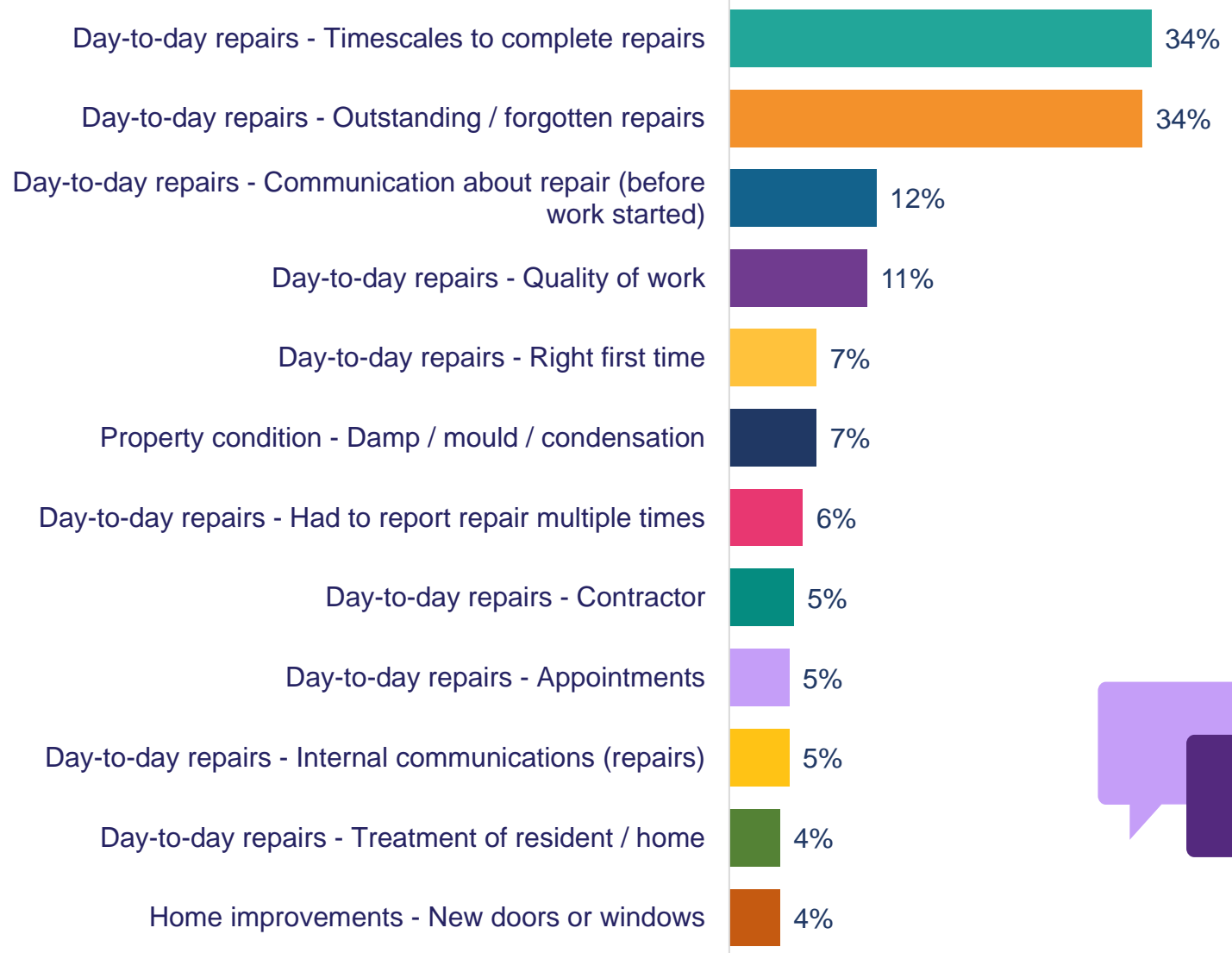
# Comments – Dissatisfaction with Repairs

Those residents not satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service were also asked to provide more information and what could be improved, and 267 of them responded.

The time taken to complete repairs and outstanding or forgotten repairs stand out as the most common issues, with more than two-thirds of the residents highlighting these issues (34% each). These are also common areas of concern for other social landlords, which could be due in part, to their catching up since the pandemic, as well as being faced with issues around increased costs and shortages of labour and materials. In addition, expectations about times to complete work can be high and difficult to match. It is vital, therefore, that Oxford CC keeps residents clearly informed about repair schedules, with updates on how long they can expect to wait.

Residents also commented upon the communication received before repairs start, the quality of the work carried out and getting repairs right first time.

In addition, problems with damp and mould are pinpointed as common property condition issues.



Number of respondents: 267



# Dissatisfaction with Repairs – Comments

## Day-to-day repairs: Outstanding repairs and timescales

*“The last repair was the hot water tap on my bath wouldn’t stop running. The delay in getting someone out meant that I had to turn off the water to the bathroom and fill the bath from the kitchen.”*

*“I have several outstanding jobs, the staff come to look then do nothing.”*

*“I do not get many repairs, because it takes forever for them to do anything.”*

*“I had problems with my windows. They fixed one, but the bedroom window is still waiting to be fixed. They said they would come back, and it’s now been months and I am still waiting.”*

*“I have a dripping tap, they came out, but it is still dripping, and it took them two weeks for them to come out.”*

*“This is an old flat, and the boiler is very out of date, and I have had lots of issues with it but rather than replace it, they just mend bits. It’s not up to date. You then have to wait for them to come out, and it is still ongoing.”*

## Day-to-day repairs: Communication and customer care

*“I don’t think anyone communicates, jobs go missing and the timescales aren’t communicated.”*

*“Whenever I have reported a repair, you have to report it three or four times over a period of a month. Then when you call back, they say they don’t have anything on record, and you have to re-report it.”*

*“Admin staff over the phone are rude, I have had to, unfortunately, learn to record calls and communicate with OCC via email, because a tenant’s word means nothing to them, just like this survey won’t make a change!”*

*“Better communication regarding timing. Better access to staff.”*

*“I think their communication is appalling, they don’t update tenants regarding what’s happening you have to chase them up.”*

*“It takes an age for them to respond. If they do respond, they forget what was said or they do not turn up to appointments. They are awful.”*

## Property condition: Damp & mould

*“The actual condition of the property, the damp was reported many months ago, and it’s still not been sorted out, and it’s spreading.”*

*“About 2 years ago the lady next door had a leak, I noticed mould on my wall which took 18 months to resolve.”*

*“Currently dealing with mould in the flat and nothing that can be done according to the council, so tenant using own expenses to paint over and kill of mould.”*

*“I don’t know I just want them to sort out the dampness which is everywhere in this house.”*

*“I have mould in the dining room. There is no extractor fan in the bathroom and a balcony leaking like a sieve.”*

*“They came to fix my drain outside, but it now needs repairing again (the same issue) as water is gushing out (it is the join in the drainpipe). When it rains, I get dark patches on my wall. We also reported mould spots, but we have been told there is nothing they can do.”*

## Quality of repairs and other issues

*“I have never had a problem with OCC workers. It is your subcontractors who don’t care. Get more OCC workers who are skilled and train your reception staff to become more knowledgeable.”*

*“Sometimes they are ok and sometimes they are not. The quality of work is poor.”*

*“Because I had an electrical rewire and the house was left in quite a mess. There was holes made that should never have been made, the paintwork that was damaged was just left. Because I had wooden floors, I was left to pay for carpet to go down and never got any help or nothing. They should have come out to see what the contractors had done.”*

*“I would like them to send contractors who are professional and know what they are doing on repairs.”*

*“The quality of the repairs are unsatisfactory; I don’t feel the people care enough about repairs and I’m waiting for a repair for my roof leaking.”*



# Responsible Neighbourhood Management



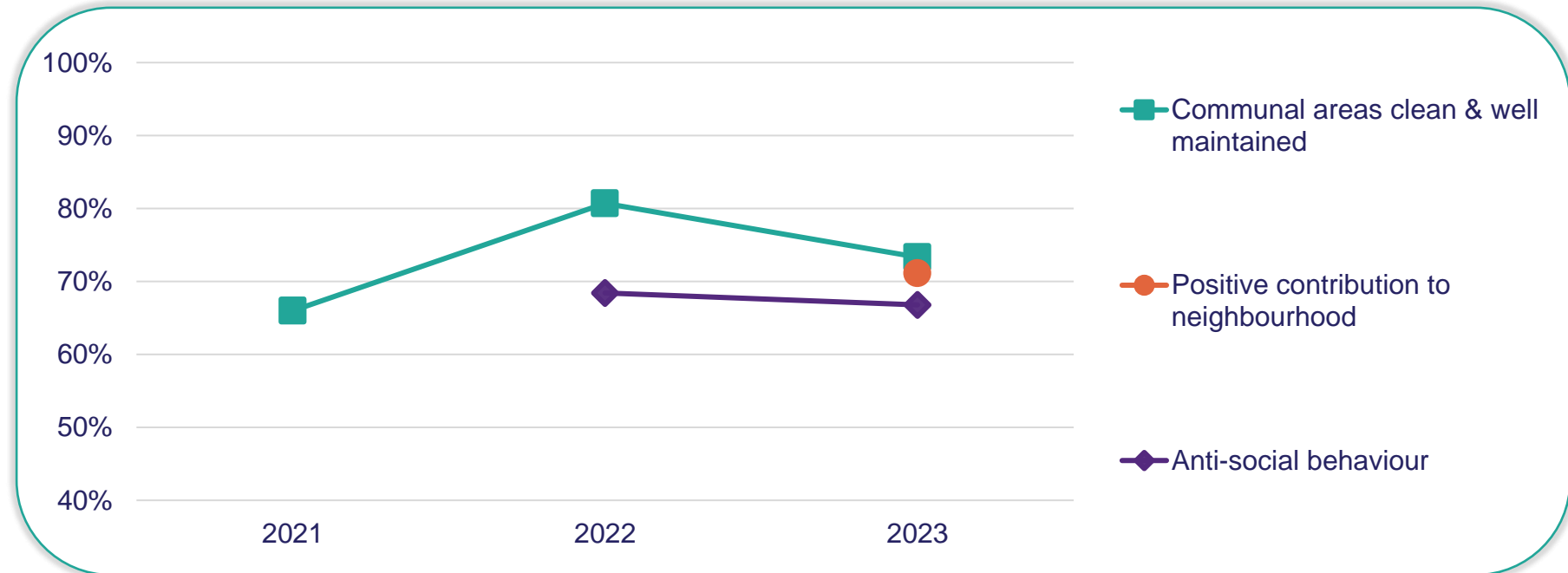
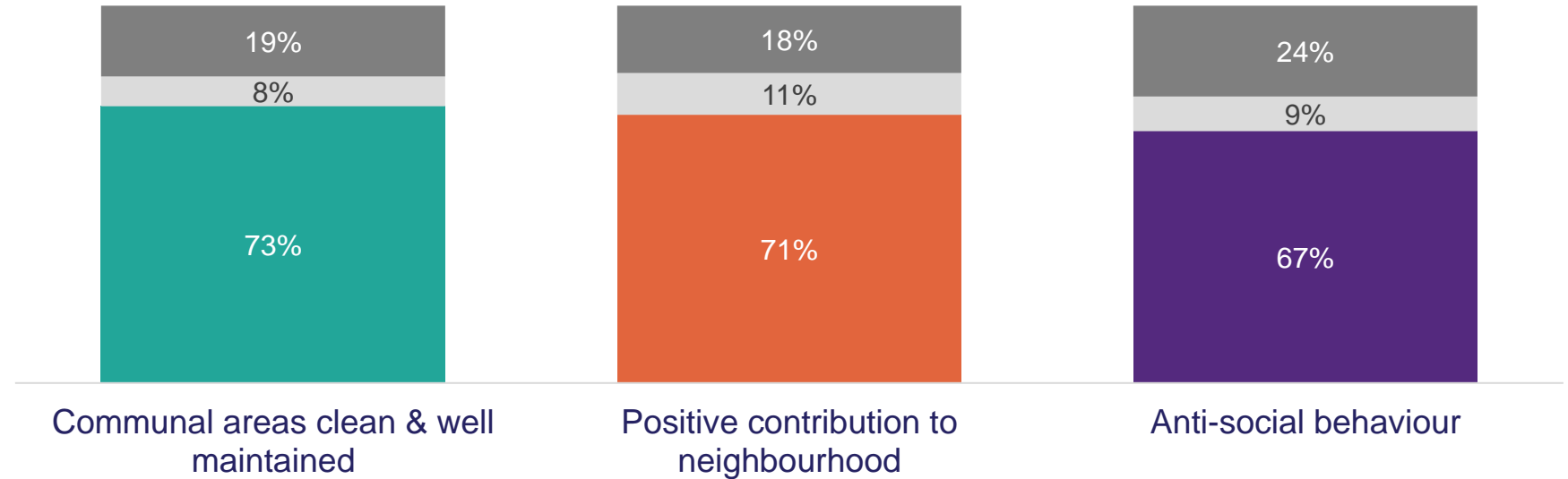


# Responsible Neighbourhood Management

Half of the residents surveyed stated that they live in a building with communal areas that Oxford CC is responsible for maintaining (49%). Of these residents, 73% are satisfied that Oxford CC keeps their communal areas clean and well maintained. Satisfaction is down by 7 percentage points since the previous survey; however, it is still an increase compared with the 2021 survey results (66%). Almost one in five residents are not happy with the upkeep of the communal areas (19%), with the aforementioned comments suggesting this is caused in part due to the frequency of the cleaning service and the grounds maintenance.

In 2023, 71% of residents are satisfied that Oxford CC makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood, and 18% are dissatisfied. This is the first time this metric has been included, so will provide a baseline to compare future surveys against.

Two-thirds of residents are satisfied with how Oxford CC deals with anti-social behaviour (67%), with a quarter dissatisfied with this service (24%). This measure has remained fairly consistent since the previous survey, dropping by just 2 percentage points.





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# Respectful & Helpful Engagement

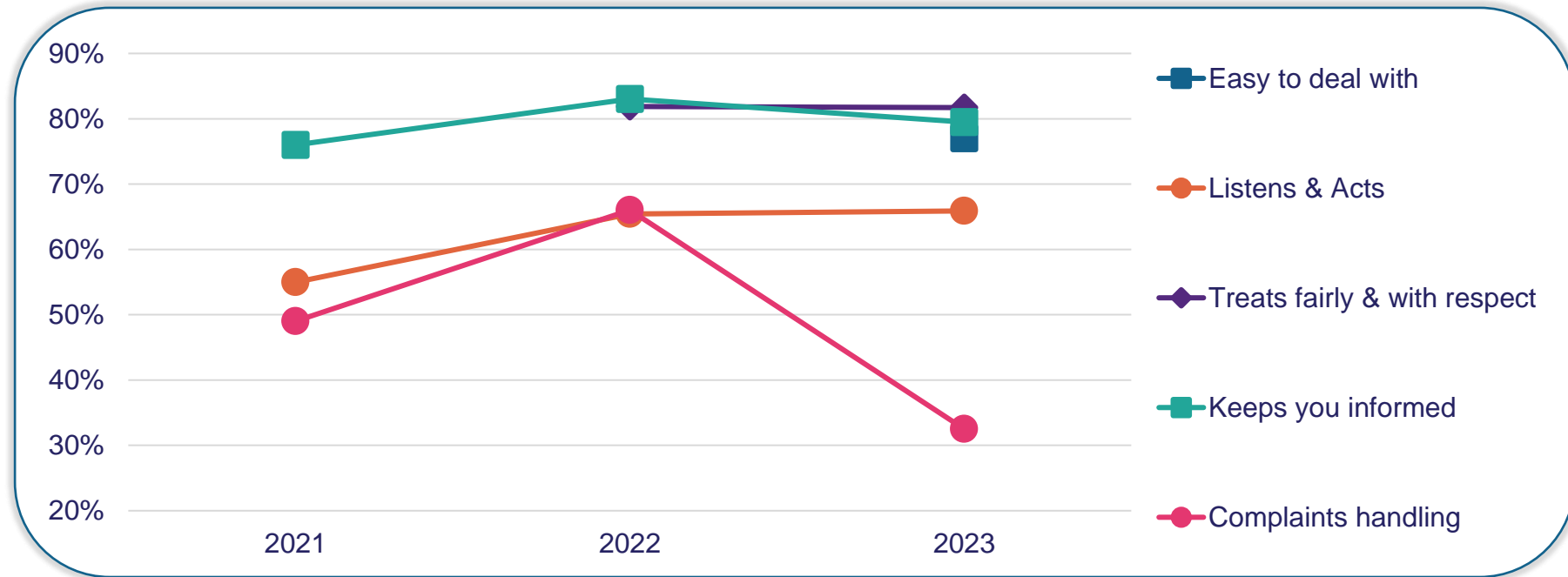
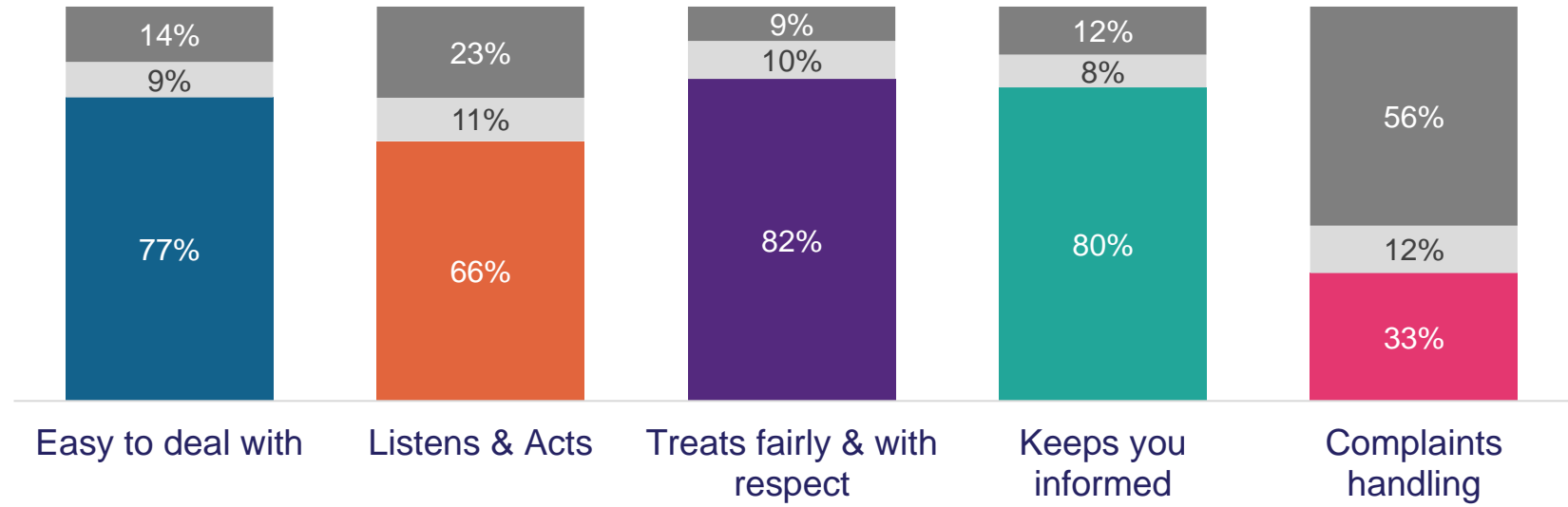


# Respectful & Helpful Engagement

More than four-fifths of residents surveyed agree that they are treated fairly and with respect (82%) with almost as many satisfied that they are kept informed about things that matter to them (80%). In addition, over three-quarters of residents find Oxford CC easy to deal with (77%). These measures have remained fairly constant since the last survey.

Two-thirds of residents are satisfied that Oxford CC listens to their views and acts on them (66%), which is stable compared with 2022, and 11 percentage points higher than 2021. However, more than a fifth of residents are dissatisfied with how they are listened to (23%). Satisfaction with this measure can be influenced by a range of interactions that residents have with their landlords, including the handling of repairs and anti-social behaviour.

Just a third of residents are satisfied with how complaints are handled (33%), a fall of 34 percentage points since the previous survey. More than half of residents who stated they had made a complaint, are dissatisfied with how it was handled (56%), indicating that this is an area to focus on for improvement. It should also be noted that almost three-fifths of residents surveyed were aware that Oxford CC had changed its complaints procedure (57%).



# Comments – Customer services & Communications

Residents who stated that they are not satisfied with customer service and communications, were asked to provide more information and what Oxford CC could improve. A total of 348 residents commented, more than a third of the total number of residents surveyed (36%), indicating a significant level of dissatisfaction with these aspects of service.

There is no standout issue, with residents mentioning a range of service areas, however, comments about customer service and communications relating to the repairs service are some of the most numerous.

Dissatisfaction with how staff listen to and take an interest in residents' issues and show care, empathy and support to residents, are also common themes.

Problems with the answering of phones, call handling, and staff not returning calls or emails, are also frequently highlighted in the comments, as is the time taken to resolve enquiries, and more general communication and information concerns.



Number of respondents: 348

# Customer Service & Communications – Comments

## Communications & information – Day-to-day repairs

*“The customer service, I don’t know whether they pass a message on, or if the other team is reading the messages, the repairs I report are outstanding, the tap is faulty, twice I reported it and they come and say it is fine, it disappoints me.”*

*“They could improve on their communication, either by email or with workers in a timely way, having repairmen come when they say they will come.”*

*“They have ignored my complaint over several issues relating to repairs.”*

*“Having the correct people in the right department who know when someone is calling up that they know the answers and also not having so many contractors so you’re having to wait on a longer timescale for them to do the work.”*

*“If I’ve got a repair, they never let me know when they’re coming out.”*

*“When you phone up for a repair, they give you a date and no one turns up.”*

## Customer service & contact – Answering and returning calls

*“Basically, when you phone them up sometimes you have to wait before you get someone to speak to, that’s the main thing, always seems to be a long wait.”*

*“I tried to call them to fix issues, but they never answer the phone.”*

*“Every time you call, they say the person you need will call you back and they don’t. They make no effort to contact you and there is never an alternative person to speak to.”*

*“I think there is too much options when you call up, they need to simplify it more.”*

*“Long times waiting on the phone, can’t ever get to the right department, and being on hold for long times.”*

*“Often, I ask a question and get told someone will call me back and they do not, this happens many times. This is when I phone the Customer Contact Centre, who cannot answer questions and always have to take a message and get someone to call back.”*

## Customer service & contact – Generally

*“It depends on who you’re talking to. Sometimes I feel they need people with more training.”*

*“It’s a bit hit and miss, either you get a rude, arrogant person who won’t do anything and snubs you off, or you get someone who goes out of their way to try and help as much as they can when I need it. Sometimes, their staff need to be taught that having manners and a bit of respect goes a long way. The way I see it is like this, I wouldn’t go and ring them and be disrespectful and rude, so I would expect the same level of courtesy back.”*

*“Train your staff better. I do not wish to talk with people who do not know anything.”*

*“Sometimes they listen and sometimes they don’t.”*

*“They need to see us as real people. Most tenants would prefer not to call the contact team because of how they treat them.”*

*“Sometimes they listen, other times it’s like talking to a brick wall.”*

## Other matters

*“We have no tenancy manager, and on the rare occasion we get one they do not take note of what we say, and they do not get things done for us.”*

*“They need to improve everything. Often there is no record of your query. If you miss a bill payment, they are quick to get in touch about that and ask lots of questions regardless that I have paid everything for 36 months.”*

*“They know the situation of their housing and they need to check it and make sure it’s suitable - I am in an old house and they painted over cracks etc. which are now appearing.”*

*“Text service for appointments and stuff.”*

*“Treat everyone fairly. They are very pro-Asian, and we should all be treated equally well.”*

*“They don’t have half the workers they used to have. When they do things, I think it’s all outside people now not council workers.”*



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# Improvement Suggestions



# Improvement Suggestions

Residents were asked what one thing Oxford CC could improve, and almost all residents surveyed, responded (935). However, more than a fifth (21%) said that they did not know what improvement to suggest or replied with 'no comment'. In addition, 11% of comments made were positive about the services provided.

Unsurprisingly, the top categories for improvement suggestions are those that have featured prominently in the previous free-text questions, with day-to-day repairs and customer services and contact having the biggest share of comments at 13% each.

Breaking down the categories further, 4% of comments relate to the timescales to complete repairs, while 3% concern outstanding or forgotten repairs. Listening carefully and taking an interest in residents' concerns is a key area for improving communications and information, as is the care, empathy and support provided for customer services and contact.

In addition, tenants mentioned grounds maintenance and neighborhood problems, such as anti-social behaviour.

Other suggested areas for improvement range from the upkeep of communal areas to property condition, and management and organisational policies.

## Categories



Number of respondents: 935



# Improvements to Service – Comments

## Day to day repairs

*“Provide more resources to the repairs team, seems like they need more help and support.”*

*“An online portal to report repairs would be great“*

*“Complete the work on outstanding repairs.”*

*“Have more staff to do repairs.”*

*“I suppose general repairs and a better time frame so sometimes you have to wait 2 or 3 weeks to get a door fixed but for me when I work nights, I like to know the door is secure and safe when I go to work as I work nights so the wait time for jobs is a little too long.”*

*“If you complain about something they need to come out as soon as possible and fix it. My boiler is leaking, and I am still waiting for this to be fixed.“*

*“The callouts could be quicker; I have been waiting for a year for a job to go ahead. “*

## Communications & information

*“Like I said communicating with each other within the different departments.”*

*“The responses in general to everything, like repairs and complaints, they are not a very responsive organisation.”*

*“Be more honest with replies rather than being ambiguous .”*

*“Giving information when transferring property.”*

*“Improve their online services.”*

*“I think letting us know if there are changes that they are going to make, like when you ring them up to complain. I didn’t know the procedure before you told me.“*

*“Listening to tenants more clearly with their complaints.”*

*“Make it easy to access them online like online banking, automated services, or chatbot.”*

*“I think more communication.”*

## Customer service & contact

*“Listen to the tenants more as they are the ones living in the properties and know what’s going on. Also, to take concerns raised seriously.”*

*“Since Covid, the service has gone down. They should deal and take action when tenants present problems, and they should be more approachable.”*

*“Be more helpful to tenants, more understanding.”*

*“Customer services need to know what they are doing, how to deal with situations and to improve the way they speak to people.”*

*“Get back in contact with tenant, don’t leave the hanging.”*

*“To be honest answer the phone! I can phone up and spend an hour trying to get through to the right department.”*

*“I am given a number to call if I need anything but through everything, I find the automated answering service quite confusing.”*

## Other issues

*“Take their shoes off when they enter someone’s house or put on some shoe covers.”*

*“A shorter process for ASB. When ASB is affecting families and the mental health of other residents there should be a quicker process of eviction.”*

*“The general maintenance of the areas that they manage and making sure it is kept tidy always. The public bins in the area should also be emptied more regularly.“*

*“The way they look after the area with regards to grass cutting, trimming trees and so on. “*

*“A few more checks on the parking. Cause people park where they like, and they cause obstructions.“*

*“It would be a great help to have local offices for tenants.”*

*“The Housing Officer should go and check the neighbourhood and regular property visits.”*





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# Resident Involvement & Future Surveys



# Resident Involvement & Future Surveys

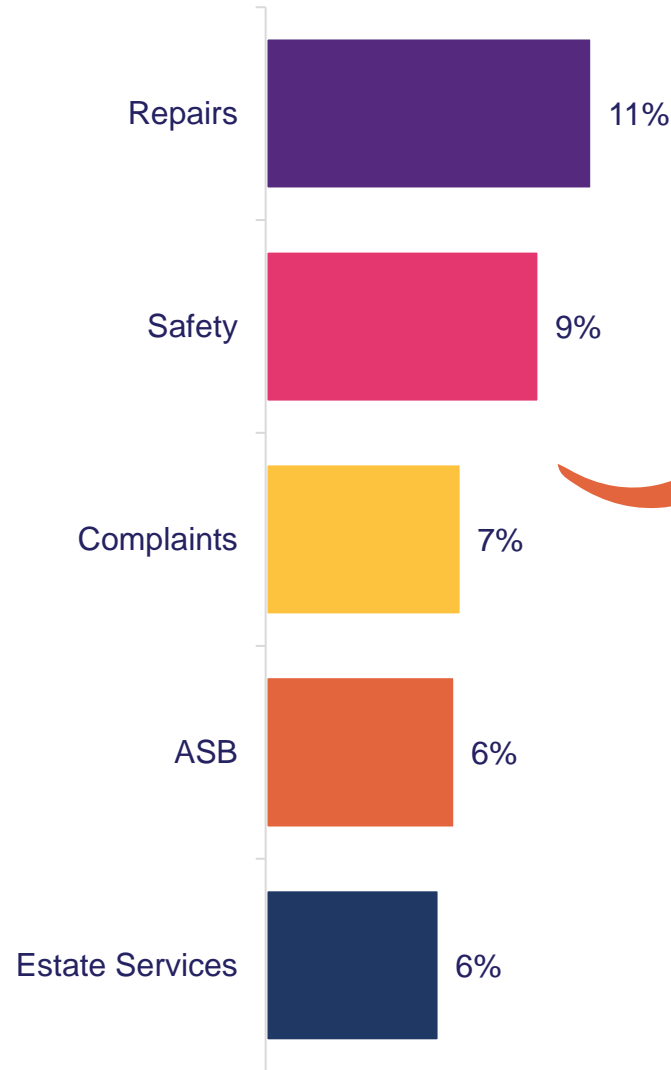
Residents were asked if they would like to work with Oxford City Council to make changes and improvements to their services, and if so, which service areas would they be interested in being involved in.

Of those who responded to the survey, 11% are interested in becoming involved in the repairs service, 9% with safety, 7% with complaints and 6% with anti-social behaviour and estate services.

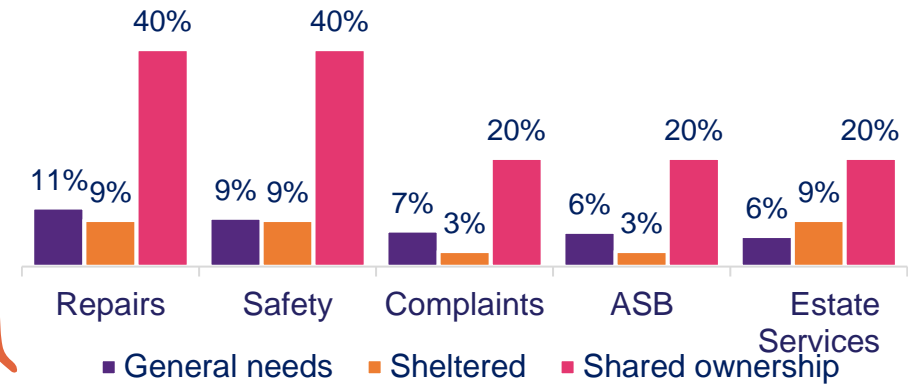
Looking at interest by housing need, shared ownership residents have the highest percentage of interest. With such a small number of respondents however (5), this equates to 2 residents each for repairs and safety, and one each for complaints, anti-social behaviour and estate services. For all areas except estate services, general needs tenants show more interest in getting involved than tenants in sheltered housing.

When asked about contact methods for future surveys, most residents said that they would prefer to take part via a telephone call (57%), whereas a fifth of residents would prefer an email with a link to an online survey (20%). A postal survey is preferable to 10% of residents and 5% would prefer to be surveyed by a link sent in a text message.

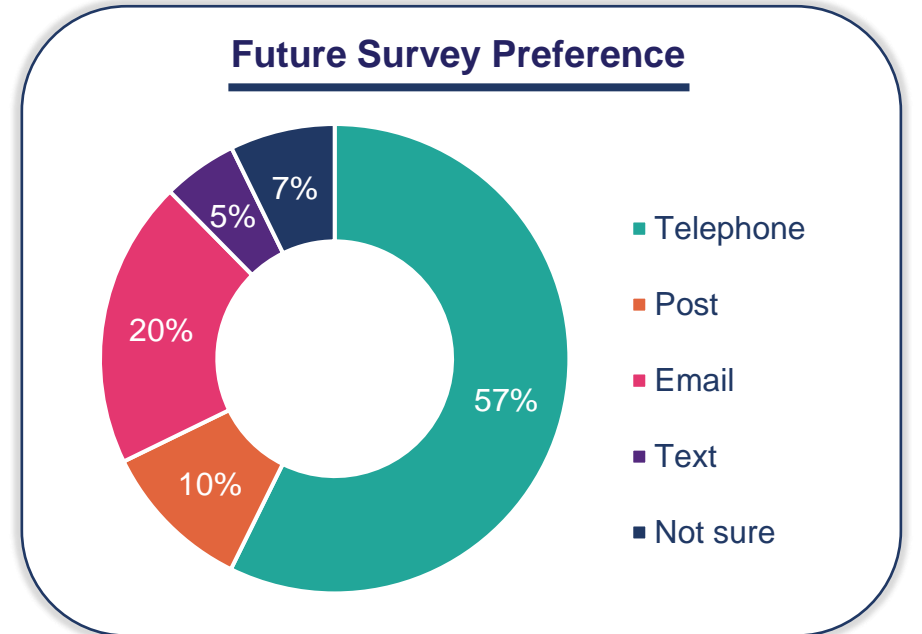
## Interest in Involvement



## Interest by Housing Need



## Future Survey Preference





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# Trends



Eleven of the fifteen measures included in this survey were also present in last year's survey, and seven of these measures were asked in 2021.

Looking at the satisfaction results over the last two years, we can see an upward trend in satisfaction with how Oxford CC listens to its residents and acts upon their views. While there has been an increase in satisfaction with the time taken to complete the last repair, and the overall service provided, since last year.

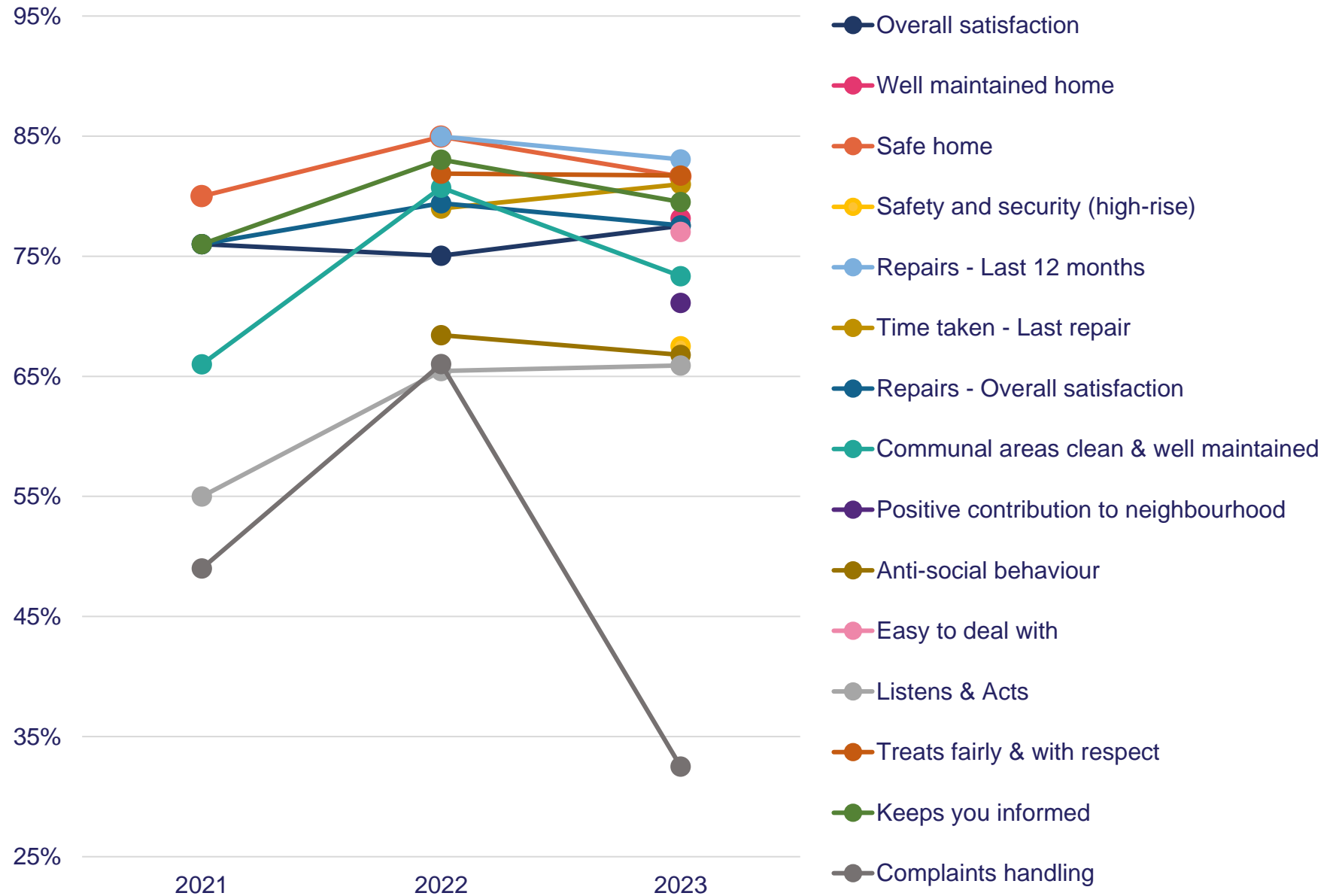
However, the satisfaction ratings for most measures have fallen slightly or remained stable, compared with 2022.

The biggest change in satisfaction ratings over the three surveys, is for complaints handling, where satisfaction rose by 17 percentage points to 66% in 2022, and then fell to 33% this year.

Satisfaction with the maintenance and cleanliness of communal areas also rose between 2021 and 2022 to a high of 81% but has fallen to 73% in the current survey.

Monitoring trends can be useful and highlight where efforts to improve are having an impact, however, most changes are small and within the margin of error for the survey.

# Trend Over Time



# Year on Year Change

The table to the right also illustrates the results for 2023, compared with those from 2022 (where possible).

This once again highlights that many of the measures have decreased slightly, with just overall satisfaction with Oxford CC's services and satisfaction with the time taken to complete the last repair, having increased by 2 percentage points.

Most other measures have remained fairly stable, with decreases within the margin of error. However, satisfaction with the maintenance and cleanliness of the communal areas has decreased by 7 percentage points.

As highlighted previously, the biggest fall in satisfaction since the previous survey is for the handling of complaints, which is down by 34 percentage points. This may partly be due to a change in the way this question is asked as part of the TSM suite. Now only residents who state they have made a complaint in the last 12 months are asked this question, which has generally caused satisfaction to drop across the sector.

	2022	2023	Change
Overall satisfaction	75%	78%	2%
Well maintained home	--	78%	
Safe home	85%	82%	-3%
Safety and security (high-rise)	--	68%	
Repairs - Last 12 months	85%	83%	-2%
Time taken - Last repair	79%	81%	2%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	79%	78%	-2%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	81%	73%	-7%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	--	71%	
Anti-social behaviour	68%	67%	-2%
Easy to deal with	--	77%	
Listens & Acts	65%	66%	0%
Keeps you informed	83%	80%	-4%
Treats fairly & with respect	82%	82%	0%
Complaints handling	66%	33%	-34%





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# Understanding Satisfaction



# Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

The charts opposite show both the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the range of services provided.

Sometimes where satisfaction is low, the remaining residents can be split between those who fall into the neutral middle ground and those who are actually dissatisfied. This difference can signal areas where residents do not have strong opinions or areas where a high percentage of them are actually dissatisfied.

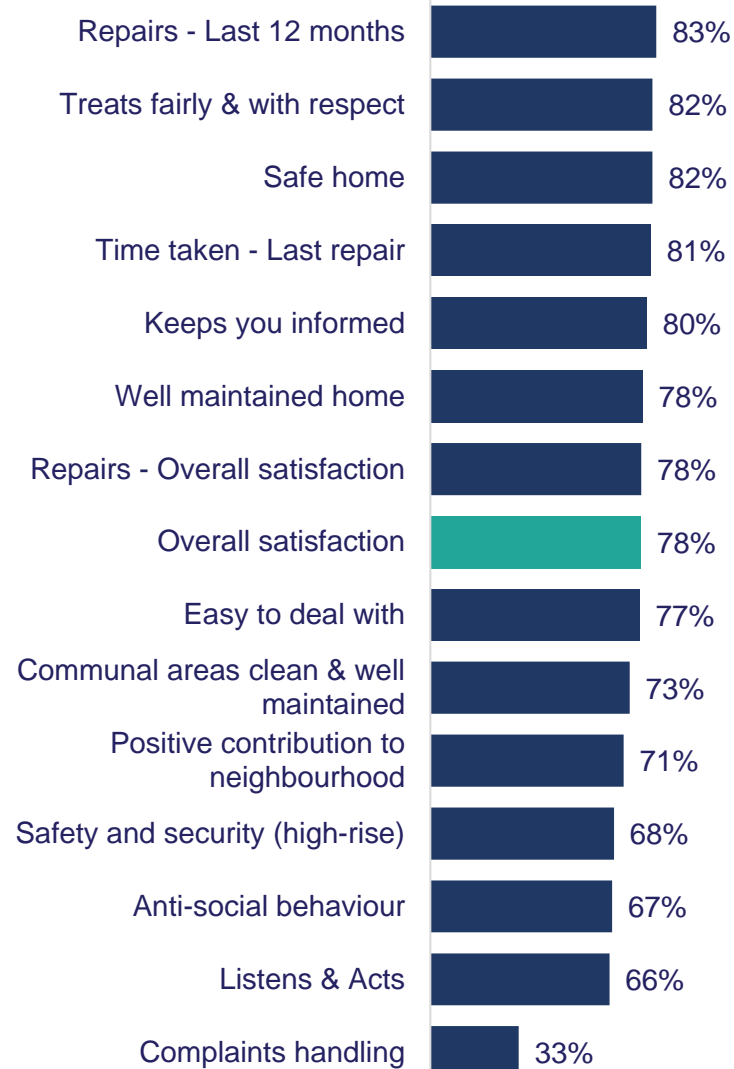
For Oxford CC, the highest rate of dissatisfaction is for complaints handling (56%), and this corresponds to the lowest level of satisfaction at 33%, with 12% of residents giving a neutral response.

Satisfaction that Oxford CC makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood is at 71%, whereas dissatisfaction is 18%, so around 11% of residents are also undecided about this measure – perhaps as they are unaware of the contribution made.

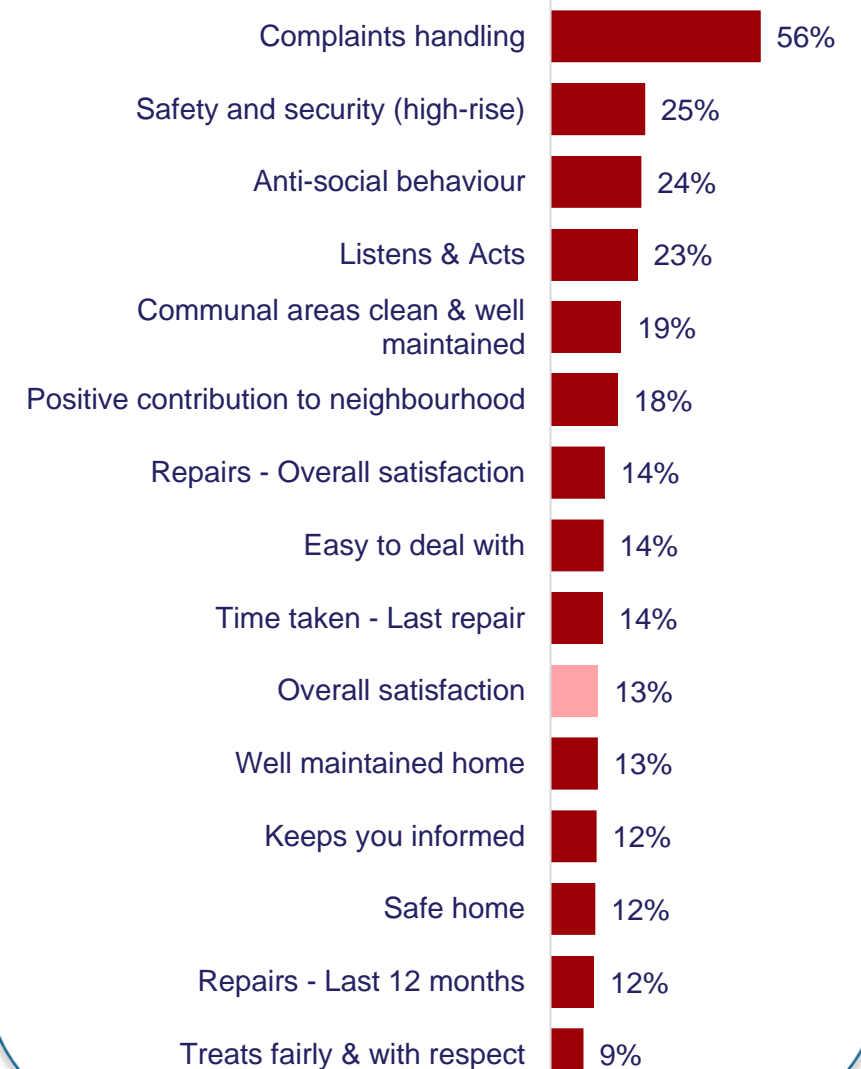
Overall satisfaction lies mid-way down the rankings for satisfaction, and is around the same position for dissatisfaction, with 10% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Just 9% of residents disagree that they are treated fairly and with respect, with 10% neutral on this measure.

## Satisfaction with measures



## Dissatisfaction with measures





# Combined Comments

The tables to the right include an analysis of all comments received in 2023 across open-ended questions, with positive comments displayed in green.

Unsurprisingly, this shows that by far the most frequent negative comment area is the repairs service. Outstanding or forgotten repairs and the timescales to complete repairs, are deemed hot topics across all questions, although the quality of repair work carried out, and communication about repairs are also mentioned frequently.

Customer services and contact is also a top area for negative comments, with the degree of care and empathy shown, as well as issues with the answering of phones and call handling, highlighted.

In addition, property condition, particularly relating to damp and mould problems, and how Oxford CC communicates and provides information, are key areas of concern for residents in 2023.

Other areas frequently commented upon relate to the upkeep of outdoor and communal areas, and general neighbourhood issues.



Top Comment Areas	
Day-to-day repairs	28%
Customer services & contact	17%
No comment / don't know	14%
Property condition	11%
Communications and information	10%
Grounds maintenance	7%
Positive comments	7%
Communal areas	6%
Neighbourhood problems	6%
Home improvements	5%
Safety and security	5%

Hot Topics	
Day-to-day repairs - Outstanding / forgotten repairs	11%
Day-to-day repairs - Timescales to complete repairs	10%
Positive comments - Generally happy, no problems	5%
Property condition - Damp / mould / condensation	5%
Communications and information - Listen carefully, take interest	4%
Customer services & contact - Care, empathy, support etc.	3%
Day-to-day repairs - Quality of work	3%
Day-to-day repairs - Communication about repair (before work started)	2%
Customer services & contact - Answering phones	2%
Communal areas - Frequency of cleaning service	2%
Communications and information - Communications (in general)	2%



# Key Driver Analysis

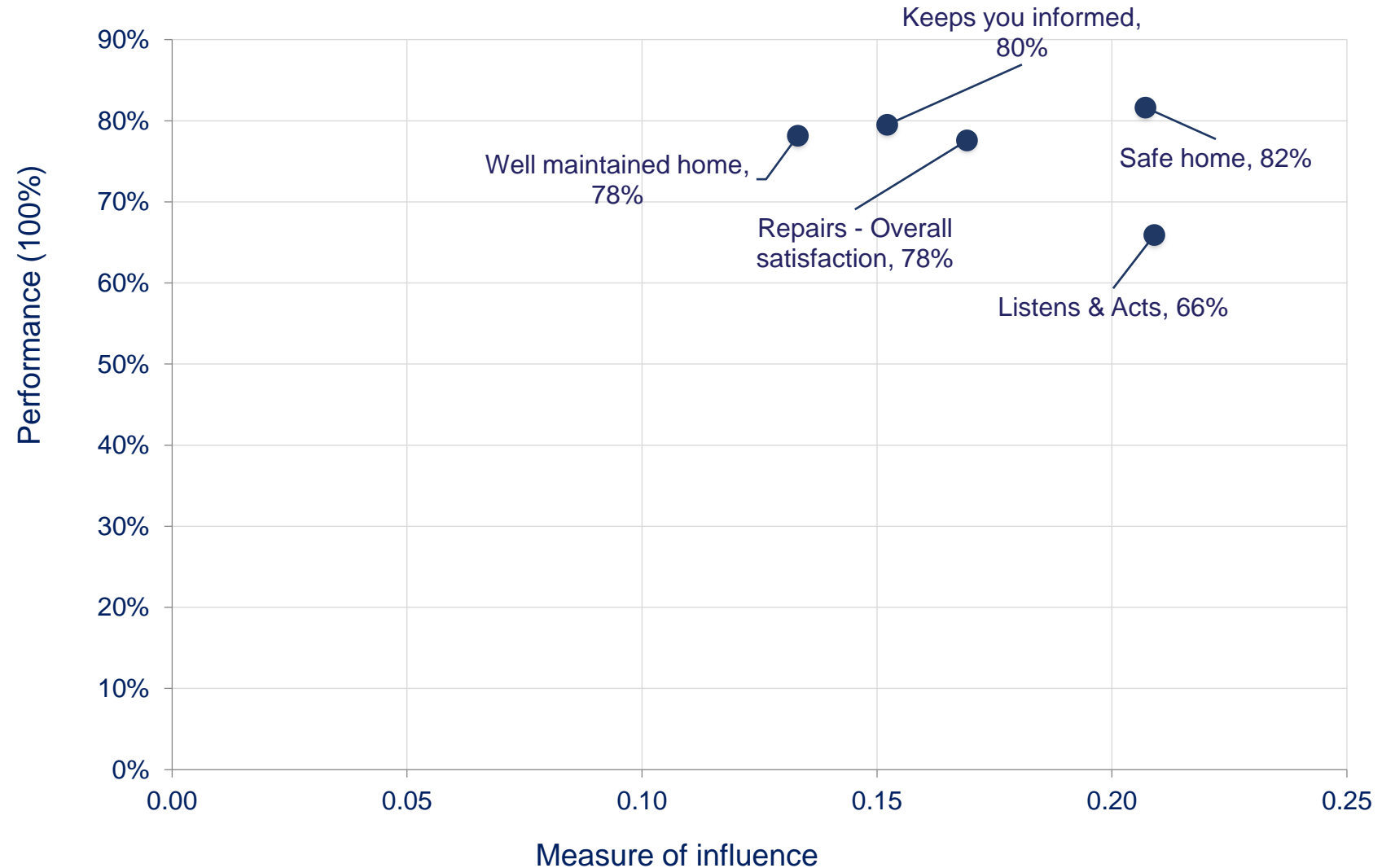
Key driver analysis is used to examine the relationship between the different variables (the questions asked in the survey) and determine which elements of the service are the key drivers for residents' overall satisfaction.

When analysing all the results for 2023, the most important drivers of residents' satisfaction with the overall services are that Oxford CC listens to their views and acts upon them and that they are provided with a safe home.

Other influential factors are satisfaction with the overall repairs and maintenance service and that residents are kept informed about issues that concern them. In addition, the home being well maintained is also important.

The implication of this analysis is that if improvements around the most influential measures can be achieved, it is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction with the overall services provided.

**Key Driver Analysis – Overall Satisfaction**



# Benchmarking – Acuity Clients (LCRA)

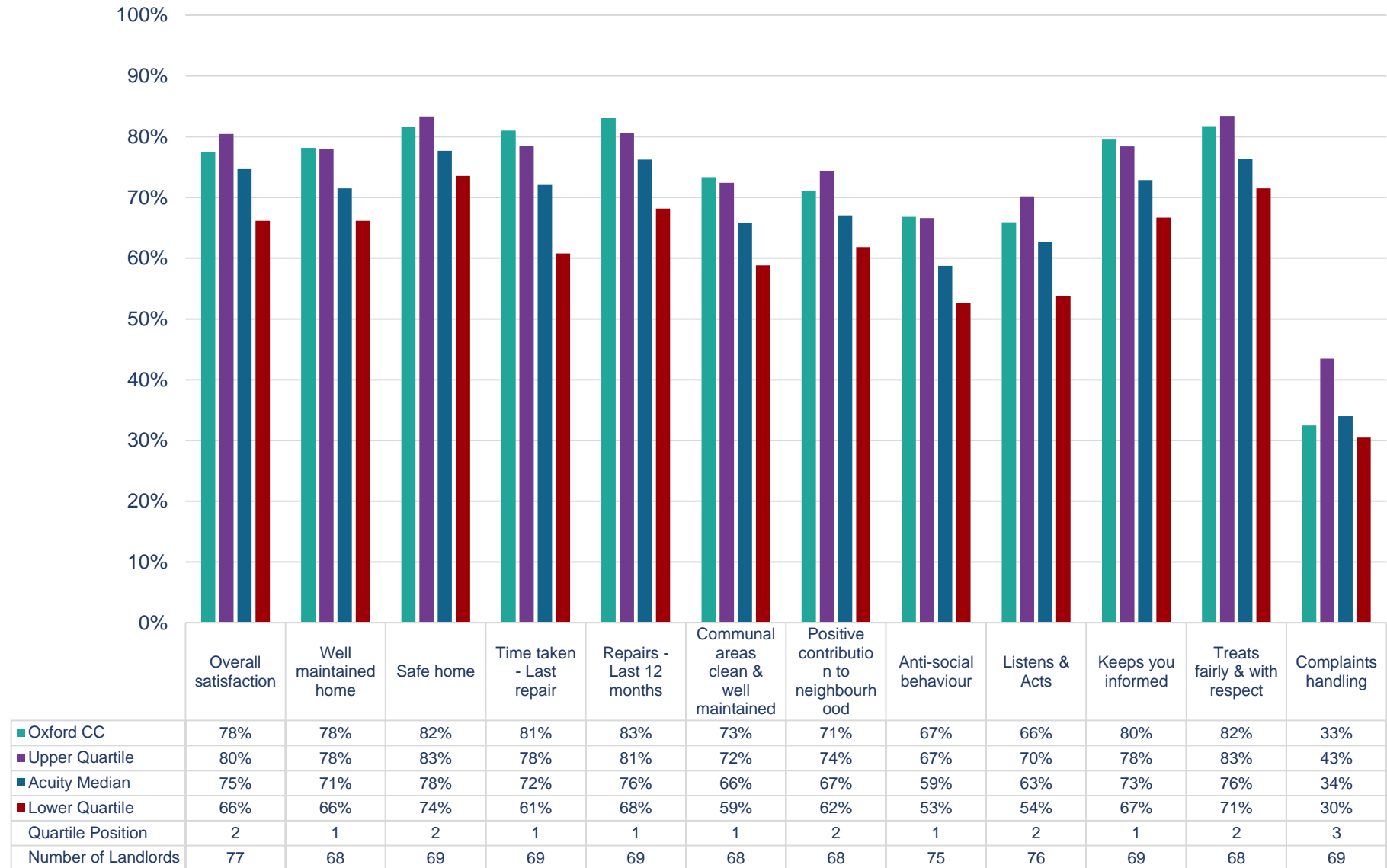
It is also possible to compare performance on the core questions against Acuity clients that have been using the new TSM questions during the year. The chart shows the quartile positions based on the results collected from Q1 to Q2 2023/24, for all LCRA responses.

All of Oxford CC’s ratings are above the median, except for the handling of complaints, which is just below the median and falls into the third quartile.

Oxford CC’s ratings for most measures are in the top quartile, with 5 falling below the upper quartile mark and into the second quartile.

This chart also demonstrates that while complaints handling is by far the measure with the lowest satisfaction rating for Oxford CC, it is just 1% below the median for all Acuity LCRA clients.

**Satisfaction Levels Acuity Median Q1 – Q2 23/24**



# Benchmarking – Acuity Clients (Councils – LCRA)

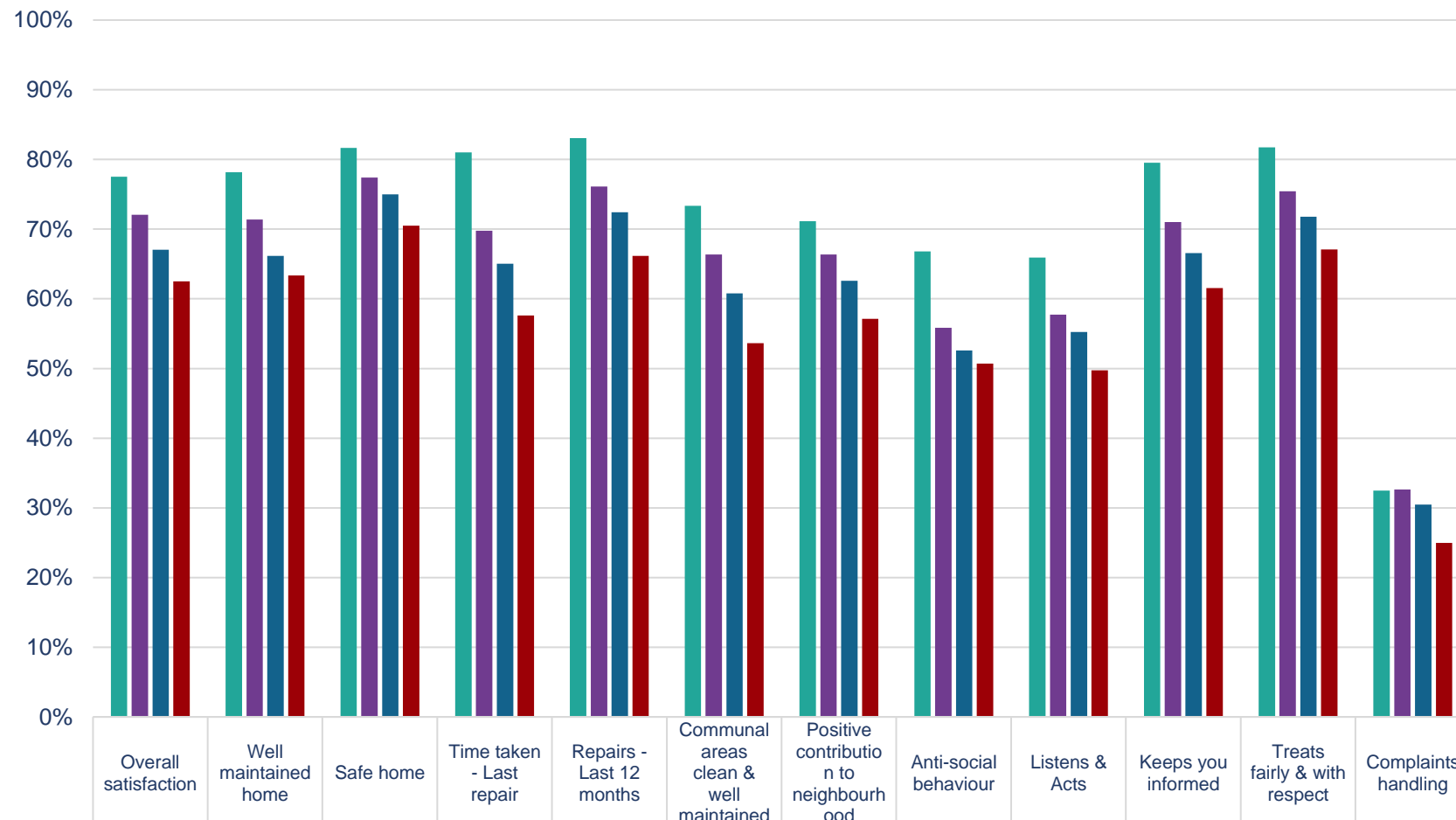
## Satisfaction Levels Acuity Median Q1 – Q2 23/24

The chart opposite shows Oxford CC's performance on the core questions compared with Acuity clients who are also councils and have used the new TSM questions during the year. The chart shows the quartile positions based on the results collected from Q1 to Q2 2023/24 for LCRA (Councils) clients.

All of Oxford CC's ratings are above the median and all except for complaints handling are also above the upper quartile mark and fall into the top quartile.

Complaints handling falls marginally below the upper quartile percentage and so just into the second quartile.

The chart demonstrates that Oxford CC compares very well with other councils across all the satisfaction measures, including in its handling of complaints, which is around 3% above the median value.



■ Oxford CC	78%	78%	82%	81%	83%	73%	71%	67%	66%	80%	82%	33%
■ Upper Quartile	72%	71%	77%	70%	76%	66%	66%	56%	58%	71%	75%	33%
■ Acuity Median	67%	66%	75%	65%	72%	61%	63%	53%	55%	67%	72%	30%
■ Lower Quartile	62%	63%	70%	58%	66%	54%	57%	51%	50%	62%	67%	25%
Quartile Position	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Number of Landlords	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20



# Tenure

General needs tenants form the majority of the residents surveyed, with a base of 920 residents, whereas tenants in sheltered housing account for just 35 responses. A small number of residents with shared ownership of their property also completed the survey.

While the large difference in tenure types needs to be taken into account, the table opposite shows that while satisfaction ratings are often similar between general needs and sheltered housing tenants (including for overall satisfaction), satisfaction ratings are higher among sheltered housing tenants.

With the exception of satisfaction with the positive contribution made to the neighbourhood and how complaints are handled, shared ownership residents show the lowest satisfaction ratings by some considerable margin. Satisfaction among this small group of residents is particularly low with regard to the repairs service, albeit they may have different repair liabilities.



	General needs	Sheltered	Shared ownership
Overall satisfaction	78%	83%	40%
Well maintained home	78%	80%	60%
Safe home	82%	83%	60%
Safety and security (high-rise)	68%	--	--
Repairs - Last 12 months	83%	91%	33%
Time taken - Last repair	81%	91%	0%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	78%	69%	25%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	73%	82%	60%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	70%	91%	75%
Anti-social behaviour	67%	71%	50%
Easy to deal with	77%	74%	40%
Listens & Acts	66%	65%	33%
Keeps you informed	80%	77%	50%
Treats fairly & with respect	82%	88%	40%
Complaints handling	32%	45%	33%

Base: General needs = 920, Sheltered = 35, Shared ownership = 5

# Wards

Oxford CC operates over many different ward areas, with the 10 that received the most responses to the survey presented in the table opposite.

Of these wards, overall satisfaction is lowest in Cowley (69%) and highest in Northfield Brook (87%), although Hinksey Park has several of the highest satisfaction ratings for other measures. However, most of the lowest ratings are for the Cowley ward.

Generally, when viewed across all the measures in the survey there is little difference between the wards. However, there are some stand-out rates, such as a much lower level of satisfaction with how Oxford CC deals with anti-social behaviour in Northfield Brook than in the other wards (56%) and with how complaints are handled in the Cutteslowe and Sunnymead ward (0%).



	Barton and Sandhills	Blackbird Leys	Churchill	Cowley	Cutteslowe and Sunnymead	Donnington	Hinksey Park	Littlemore	Northfield Brook	Rosehill and Iffley
Overall satisfaction	77%	78%	77%	69%	77%	76%	72%	84%	87%	73%
Well maintained home	76%	76%	79%	78%	69%	80%	86%	81%	79%	70%
Safe home	80%	81%	80%	63%	88%	80%	86%	82%	87%	82%
Safety and security (high-rise)	--	75%	79%	40%	--	--	--	--	50%	--
Repairs - Last 12 months	81%	85%	77%	83%	87%	77%	91%	89%	79%	84%
Time taken - Last repair	84%	78%	81%	73%	83%	89%	94%	91%	75%	83%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	74%	83%	79%	82%	74%	69%	84%	84%	74%	72%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	83%	70%	81%	53%	88%	82%	79%	80%	62%	77%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	69%	66%	71%	68%	68%	61%	79%	72%	68%	77%
Anti-social behaviour	68%	63%	65%	62%	82%	70%	61%	72%	56%	67%
Easy to deal with	74%	79%	74%	64%	80%	83%	80%	81%	82%	77%
Listens & Acts	74%	61%	69%	64%	70%	68%	64%	72%	68%	70%
Keeps you informed	75%	81%	81%	82%	75%	83%	81%	77%	74%	81%
Treats fairly & with respect	76%	80%	81%	78%	88%	83%	86%	89%	83%	84%
Complaints handling	42%	41%	29%	21%	0%	38%	20%	55%	38%	46%

Base: Barton and Sandhills = 96, Blackbird Leys = 119, Churchill = 94, Cowley = 45, Cutteslowe and Sunnymead = 35, Donnington = 46, Hinksey Park = 50, Littlemore = 68, Northfield Brook = 39, Rosehill and Iffley = 76

# Age Group

It is common in surveys of this type that satisfaction with housing providers and services increases with age. The results from the survey for Oxford CC demonstrate this pattern well, with the highest satisfaction scores mainly seen in residents aged over 75.

The lowest satisfaction scores are generally seen in residents aged under 35, and this is evident for most of the satisfaction measures in this survey, with the majority of the lowest ratings seen in the under 25 age group.

There are some exceptions however, with the lowest satisfaction ratings for safety and security (in high-rise blocks), Oxford CC making a positive contribution to the neighbourhood, and how anti-social behaviour is dealt with, being with those residents in the 55 to 59 age range.



	0 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85 +
Overall satisfaction	50%	73%	70%	77%	72%	79%	85%	90%	89%
Well maintained home	67%	70%	73%	75%	72%	86%	82%	91%	92%
Safe home	67%	75%	72%	83%	79%	88%	87%	91%	95%
Safety and security (high-rise)	100%	80%	54%	67%	50%	67%	100%	75%	--
Repairs - Last 12 months	60%	73%	79%	84%	79%	85%	90%	96%	90%
Time taken - Last repair	60%	76%	77%	80%	71%	80%	91%	94%	90%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	64%	71%	74%	78%	73%	74%	84%	89%	84%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	38%	67%	79%	73%	65%	78%	73%	75%	88%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	75%	64%	70%	72%	56%	73%	72%	83%	90%
Anti-social behaviour	57%	61%	63%	73%	53%	80%	69%	60%	94%
Easy to deal with	58%	66%	73%	75%	74%	79%	82%	88%	95%
Listens & Acts	33%	62%	62%	70%	57%	65%	70%	73%	82%
Keeps you informed	73%	67%	76%	81%	78%	78%	83%	89%	94%
Treats fairly & with respect	70%	77%	77%	82%	78%	80%	86%	93%	91%
Complaints handling	0%	23%	27%	38%	24%	37%	42%	33%	75%

Base: 0-24 = 12, 25-34 = 83, 35-44 = 183, 45-54 = 179, 55-59 = 110, 60-64 = 104, 65-74 = 159, 75-84 = 88, 85+ = 37

# Length of Tenancy

As residents with the longest tenancies are often among the oldest residents, satisfaction tends to be high in these groups, and to an extent, this is true of Oxford CC tenants.

Satisfaction also tends to be high for new tenants, as seen here where tenants of less than a year have the highest satisfaction ratings for more than half of all measures. This is usually because new tenants have often had less time to experience problems or require help from their landlord. However, for those measures where contact and intervention of Oxford CC services is implied – recent repairs, ease of dealing with the landlord, and complaints handling, the lowest satisfaction ratings are recorded for tenants of less than a year.

For most measures, the lowest satisfaction ratings are for residents with tenancies of between 6 and 20 years, who after being in their homes for some time, are likely to have experienced more issues.



	< 1 year	1 - 3 years	4 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 20 years	Over 20 years
Overall satisfaction	75%	76%	77%	74%	77%	82%
Well maintained home	87%	76%	83%	72%	74%	84%
Safe home	80%	79%	86%	77%	78%	90%
Safety and security (high-rise)	100%	90%	75%	44%	55%	75%
Repairs - Last 12 months	76%	78%	91%	79%	87%	86%
Time taken - Last repair	76%	79%	80%	79%	83%	84%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	88%	75%	80%	71%	76%	83%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	79%	70%	75%	72%	73%	76%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	85%	74%	77%	71%	65%	70%
Anti-social behaviour	74%	67%	71%	65%	65%	68%
Easy to deal with	69%	77%	74%	69%	80%	83%
Listens & Acts	73%	64%	70%	60%	66%	69%
Keeps you informed	80%	78%	80%	79%	77%	83%
Treats fairly & with respect	89%	82%	79%	77%	82%	84%
Complaints handling	18%	23%	36%	30%	42%	35%

Base: <1 year = 53, 1-3 years = 177, 4-5 years = 65, 6-10 years = 180, 11-20 years = 235, Over 20 years = 250

# Ethnicity

The table opposite shows satisfaction ratings for the four largest ethnic groups represented in the survey. There is a large difference in group size, however, with white residents making up the majority of the residents surveyed (599) while just 19 residents are of mixed ethnicity.

Overall satisfaction is highest for Asian or Asian British residents (85%) and lowest for residents of mixed ethnicity (58%).

For most measures, satisfaction is highest within the Asian or Asian British group of residents, and where this is not the case, often the differences between the top satisfaction ratings are small.

There are some exceptions, however, which include safety and security in high-rise accommodation and complaints handling.

The majority of the lowest satisfaction ratings are in the White and the mixed ethnic groups, although a small number are also found in the other ethnic groups.

	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Mixed	White
Overall satisfaction	85%	71%	58%	78%
Well maintained home	83%	72%	61%	78%
Safe home	80%	77%	79%	84%
Safety and security (high-rise)	60%	100%	100%	41%
Repairs - Last 12 months	87%	83%	85%	83%
Time taken - Last repair	85%	76%	77%	82%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	83%	77%	89%	77%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	70%	79%	40%	73%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	82%	82%	67%	66%
Anti-social behaviour	77%	79%	63%	60%
Easy to deal with	73%	77%	82%	77%
Listens & Acts	76%	68%	38%	64%
Keeps you informed	86%	81%	76%	79%
Treats fairly & with respect	87%	84%	85%	81%
Complaints handling	29%	35%	75%	33%

Base: Asian or Asian British = 85, Black or Black British = 92, Mixed = 19, White = 599





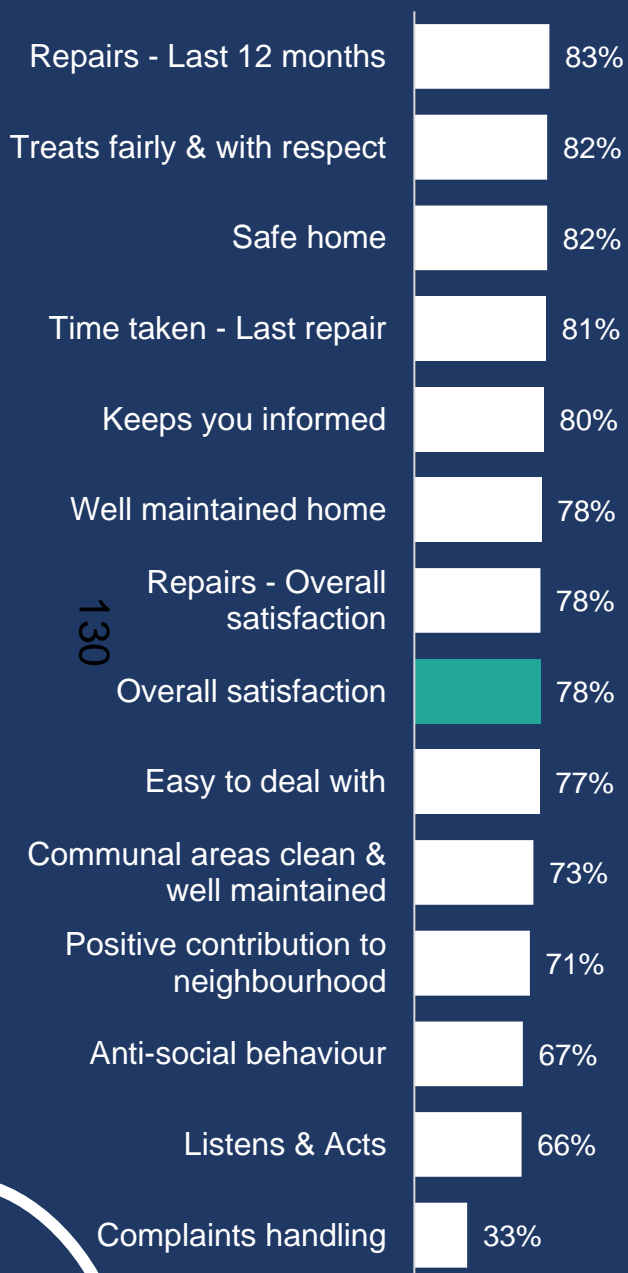


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# Conclusion



## Satisfaction 2023



## Conclusion

The survey in 2023 has incorporated all of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for the first time, which became mandatory for all registered providers of social housing to collect from April 2023. Some of these measures are comparable to previous survey questions, however, others have been used for the first time and will provide an important baseline for Oxford CC moving forward.

Overall, the survey shows very high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Oxford CC, with all 12 TSMs scoring above the Acuity median for councils, and all are in the top quartile, except for complaints handling. Almost four-fifths of residents are satisfied with Oxford CC's services overall (78%), while the highest satisfaction rating is for the repairs service in the last 12 months (83%). There are also similarly high ratings for tenants being treated fairly and with respect, the provision of a safe home, and where applicable, with the time taken to complete the most recent repair.

The survey has shown that satisfaction is lowest for how Oxford CC handles complaints (33%). Two-thirds of residents are satisfied that their views are listened to and acted upon (66%), while a similar percentage are happy with how Oxford deals with anti-social behaviour (67%). Correspondingly the highest level of dissatisfaction is seen for the handling of complaints (56%). This is likely to incorporate more than just how residents' complaints are handled – for example, residents not getting the resolution they wanted or expected or not having yet received a final outcome.

The survey included 4 open questions, giving residents the opportunity to provide more detailed information about specific issues relating to the home and communal areas, the repairs and maintenance service and customer service and communications, as well as general improvement suggestions. Feedback from all 4 questions highlighted the repairs service, with specifically the timescales for repairs and outstanding repairs as top areas of concern. Additionally, many residents voiced concerns around customer services and contact, and the condition of their property – particularly with respect to damp and mould problems.

Compared with the previous survey, which was carried out in 2022, overall satisfaction has improved slightly (up 2 percentage points), as has satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair. Most other measures have remained similar or slightly below the rates in the previous survey, with larger falls in satisfaction reported for the cleanliness and maintenance of communal areas (down 7 points) and complaints handling (down 34 points).

This report has also analysed the ratings by several different subgroups, providing more detail across different tenure types, tenancy lengths and ward areas, as well as by age and ethnicity. While the results of these breakdowns should be viewed keeping the base number of respondents in mind, some interesting patterns are seen. Satisfaction ratings are generally highest among older residents, those in sheltered housing and those with an Asian or Asian British ethnicity, while residents with the shortest and the longest tenancies show the highest satisfaction rates for most measures. Regarding area, most of the highest satisfaction ratings are seen in Hinkley Park and the lowest in Cowley wards.

# Recommendations

Oxford City Council aims to provide great homes for all – giving residents more say in the way their homes and communities are managed, and investing to improve estates, maintenance and fund refurbishments.

The survey reveals many areas of high performance, but it has also highlighted some areas where improvements could be made.

The comments made by residents give insight into what they are most concerned about and will help Oxford CC target services that may need some improvement.

Shown opposite are some recommendations that Oxford CC may wish to follow up on to help improve satisfaction in the future.



## How complaints are dealt with

Dealing with complaints has become a hot topic across the sector with a new focus on this as part of the TSM questions. The survey now includes a qualifying question, meaning only those experiencing complaints give their satisfaction rating, and this appears to have contributed to a general fall in satisfaction. Despite this caveat, the way complaints are handled is important so any failures in this service should be addressed. It is important that all tenants feel confident any complaint they make will be taken seriously and dealt with in good time. Landlords also need to make sure avenues for complaining are open and that tenants know what to do. Therefore, perhaps, Oxford CC needs to revisit this area to ensure all is being done to make sure this process works as well as possible.



## Repairs and maintenance

The way repairs and maintenance is delivered is key for all residents and generally satisfaction with Oxford CC's repairs service is high. However, the open questions reveal that many residents have concerns about outstanding or forgotten repairs that have not been dealt with and the time taken to complete repairs. While expectations around times to complete repairs can be high and difficult to match, it may be worth assessing whether Oxford CC is carrying out repairs within its target response times and if so, communicating these clearly to tenants. The quality of repairs has also been highlighted as an issue, while some residents have damp or mould problems in their homes, which should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The repairs and maintenance service is also a key driver of overall satisfaction, so improvements in this area, will likely lead to increases in satisfaction elsewhere.



## Customer services and communications

Residents have highlighted customer service issues, and in particular communication relating to repairs, as areas for improvement. Often residents report problems when contacting the council, specifically poor call handling, being passed around to different departments and sometimes experiencing a lack of care, understanding or support from staff. Many residents also say that they are not called back when promised. Of course, high call volumes can result in delays and pressure on council staff, but the council should look at current procedures to identify where improvements can be made. This will help ensure that residents are happy they can contact their service provider when necessary and that their enquiries will be dealt with efficiently and with care.

This research project was carried out to conform with ISO20252:2019 and the MRS Code of Conduct.

For further information on this report please contact:

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## Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey 2023

- Survey carried out by Acuity Research & Practice
- Designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (RSH)
- Target of 950 responses to achieve  $\pm 3.0\%$  ( $\pm 4.0\%$  gives 95% confidence)
- Achieved 960 responses
- Telephone interviews
- Good level of confidence in the results
- **Overall satisfaction increased by 3% from 75% to 78% against 2022**

1

## Comments from Acuity

*“Overall, the survey shows very high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Oxford City Council, with all 12 TSMs scoring above the Acuity median for councils, and all are in the top quartile, except for complaints handling.*

*Almost four-fifths of residents are satisfied with Oxford City Council’s services overall (78%), while the highest satisfaction rating is for the repairs service in the last 12 months (83%). There are also similarly high ratings for tenants being treated fairly and with respect, the provision of a safe home, and where applicable, with the time taken to complete the most recent repair.”*

2

## Key Findings & Actions

- Satisfaction with landlords across the country is dropping
- OCC overall satisfaction improved by 3%, against the national trend
- Satisfaction with time taken to carry out repairs improved
- Other measures dropped, though all bar two are within tolerance levels
- Satisfaction with complaint handling biggest drop to 33%
- Satisfaction with communal areas being clean & well maintained drop to 73%
- Respondents' comments captured – valuable insight
- Where consent provided, residents contacted about issues
- Negative comments on overall satisfaction analysed
  - Historical repairs, damp & mould and communal areas/grounds maintenance
- Further pro-active comms to promote improvements in repairs & maintenance now in place (Localz)
- Campaign to encourage reporting of "forgotten" repairs.
- Improved publicity on complaint case studies and lessons learned
- Increased direct engagement with tenants

3

## Further Completed Actions following 2021 STAR Survey

### Day to Day Repairs

- Localz text messaging & post work satisfaction surveys in place since July 2023 ✓

### Home & Neighbourhood

- Two-year rolling Stock Condition Survey commenced May 2023 ✓

### Communications & Engagement

- New Customer Care & Complaints Manager recruited Feb 2024 ✓
- Customer Portal (Rent & Repairs) soft launch March 2024 ✓
- Mobile working devices deployed for OCC staff March 2024. ✓
- First OCC Versaa form designed and launched March 2024, deployment of further off the shelf forms planned plus ad-hoc customised forms. ✓

4

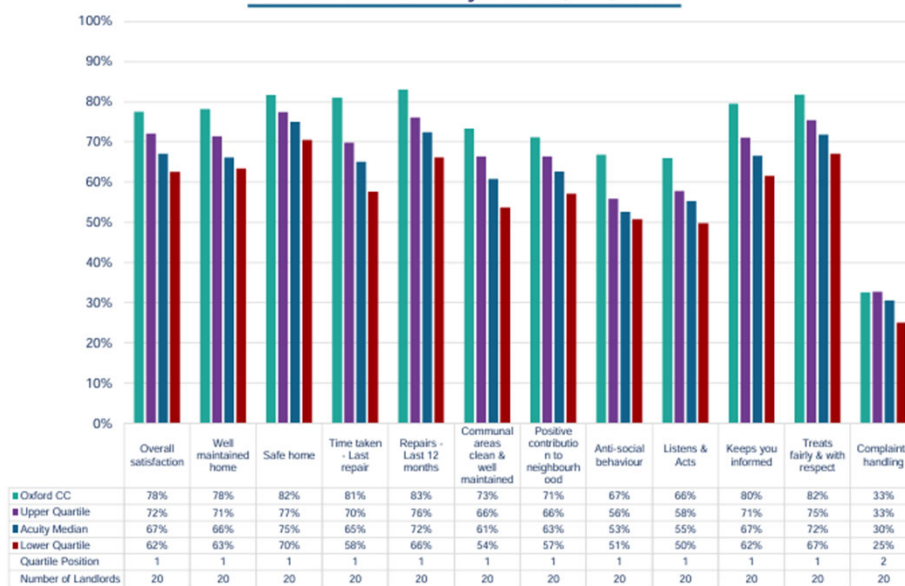
### Year on Year Change

	2022	2023	Change
Overall satisfaction	75%	78%	2%
Well maintained home	--	78%	
Safe home	85%	82%	-3%
Safety and security (high-rise)	--	68%	
Repairs - Last 12 months	85%	83%	-2%
Time taken - Last repair	79%	81%	2%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	79%	78%	-2%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	81%	73%	-7%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	--	71%	
Anti-social behaviour	68%	67%	-2%
Easy to deal with	--	77%	
Listens & Acts	65%	66%	0%
Keeps you informed	83%	80%	-4%
Treats fairly & with respect	82%	82%	0%
Complaints handling	66%	33%	-34%

5

### Benchmarking – Acuity Clients Councils

Satisfaction Levels Acuity Median Q1 – Q2 23/24



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