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Complaints Handling Scrutiny Exercise

Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group

June 2025

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1. Executive Summary

Welcome to the Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group Complaints Handling Scrutiny Exercise Report.

The SIG was established in June 2023 to represent customers of Riverside Scotland's housing services.

The SIG has a core membership of five participants, with the following aims and objectives:

- To operate on behalf of tenants and customers and work in partnership with Riverside Scotland to help ensure it provides customer-centric services of the highest standard.
- To strive, through investigation, analysis, and discussion, in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to achieve the best service performance possible.
- To develop greater customer influence in decision making on services and the functions of the housing service.

Since June 2024, Service Improvement Group (SIG) members have been independently reviewing and assessing Riverside Scotland's complaints handling policy and processes.

Due to an increase in complaints that Riverside Scotland has received in recent years, and mixed performance with complaints handling, it was acknowledged and agreed that Riverside Scotland's complaints policy and processes provided an excellent opportunity for a SIG scrutiny exercise. The SIG and Riverside Scotland agreed that a customer-led scrutiny exercise be undertaken to allow customers to understand and experience the complaints process. This report provides an independent Tenant-Led review and evaluation on behalf of the SIG.

The scope of the review included:

- To carry out an independent review of Riverside Scotland's Complaints Policy; and
- To identify areas of good practice and additionally make recommendations where appropriate.

The SIG followed an agreed work plan which included the following key stages:

a) Review of information and relevant fact finding

- Riverside Scotland's Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)
- Scottish Housing Regulator Context
- Scottish Social Housing Charter Context
- Scottish Public Service Ombudsman Context
- Riverside Scotland's Complaints Policy
- Riverside Scotland's Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) Key Performance Information and Tenant Satisfaction Reports
- Benchmarking comparisons with Almond, Barrhead; Clyde Valley; Fife; Glen Oaks; Maryhill; Thenue and West of Scotland.

b) Understanding and reviewing Riverside Scotland's systems and processes

- Understanding Riverside Scotland's operational approach to handling complaints
- Review Riverside Scotland correspondence / communications sent to tenants

c) Reality Checking – what's happening on the ground

- Case Studies of a sample of complaints that have been received by Riverside Scotland
- Meetings with Riverside Scotland staff to capture experiences and views to understand if what's happening at an operational level is reflected at a corporate/strategic level
- Seeking tenants' views on their recent experiences of the Riverside Scotland's complaints process.

2. Foreword

Welcome to the Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group (SIG) Complaints Scrutiny Exercise Report. Since June 2024, SIG members have been independently reviewing and assessing Riverside Scotland's Complaints policy and processes.

The SIG has a core membership of five individuals. Membership of the SIG is collectively competent with individual members understanding scrutiny in a strategic context whilst working together within the core standards. We

would like to take this opportunity to thank staff and customers who participated in the review, making it a positive and valuable exercise.

2.1 The Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group

The SIG is a group of tenant and customer representatives who meet independently to work collectively to review Riverside Scotland's services. This is known as "Scrutiny". Our overall aims are to:

- Learn more about Riverside Scotland's policies, procedures, and service delivery
- Understand how services are provided to customers
- Understand customers views on the services provided
- Consider what works well and what could be improved, and
- Make recommendations for changes or improvements to Riverside Scotland's Senior Management and Board.

We work to a set of agreed core standards and follow a determined Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.

We undertake our work through Tenant-Led Inspections (TLI's), Case Studies, interviewing and shadowing staff, reviewing information about Riverside Scotland's services and performance, gathering feedback from other customers, comparing, and benchmarking against other landlords and reviewing housing and service standards set by the Scottish Government within the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) and expectations of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

Riverside Scotland supported us throughout by organising meetings and providing the information we required to review services and standards.

2.2 The role of the Service Improvement Group

The role of the SIG is to:

- Take an independent view of Riverside Scotland's overall performance
- Act as a 'critical friend' of Riverside Scotland
- Agree a programme for scrutiny work and identify areas of Riverside Scotland's housing services that need to be reviewed
- Review Riverside Scotland's Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR

- Oversee tenant-led scrutiny activities
- Independently scrutinise housing services and performance in accordance with the Charter
- Make recommendations to Riverside Scotland and highlight where performance falls below agreed standards and where performance meets or exceeds customers' expectations
- Support Riverside Scotland's contribution to national housing policy consultations and regulatory frameworks
- Report to tenants and other customers on progress being made
- Review and monitor its own performance; and
- Promote equality and diversity.

2.3. Our core standards

Our work is based on the following core standards:

- Being accountable to all tenants and customers
- Being open and honest and act with transparency
- Reflecting the needs and aspirations of tenants and customers
- Making recommendations based on robust evidence that is proportionate and reflects the context in which the Riverside Scotland operates
- Respecting the views of the SIG members
- Respecting the decision-making role of Riverside Scotland

3. The Scrutiny Process – Our Approach

3.1 Selecting a Service for Scrutiny

The SIG undertook a desk top study comparing and benchmarking Riverside Scotland's performance from the 2023-24 ARC report. SIG members noted Riverside Scotland's increasing number of complaints (both at Stage 1 and Stage 2) in recent years, combined with poorer performance in comparison to other RSLs on complaints handling, and expressed interest in further investigating this area to ascertain why, using a Case Study approach. It was agreed that the Service Improvement Group would carry out a customer-led scrutiny exercise into Complaints Handling.

3.2 The Key Stages of Scrutiny

The SIG followed an agreed work plan for the Complaints Scrutiny Exercise, which included the following key stages:

a) Review of information and relevant fact finding

- Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) context
- Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Riverside Scotland Complaints Policy
- Riverside Scotland Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) Key Performance Information and Tenant Satisfaction Reports
- Benchmarking comparisons with Almond; Barrhead; Clyde Valley; Fife; Glen Oaks; Maryhill; Thenue and West of Scotland.

b) Understanding and reviewing Riverside Scotland's systems and processes

- Understanding Riverside Scotland's operational approach to investigating, responding to and resolving complaints
- Review Riverside Scotland correspondence / communications sent to tenants

c) Reality Checking – what's happening on the ground

- Tenant-led review of complaint Case Studies which involved reviewing a random sample of complaints, and reviewing how these were resolved
- Meetings with Riverside Scotland staff to capture experiences and views to understand if what's happening at an operational level is reflected at a corporate/strategic level
- Seeking tenants' views on their recent experiences of the Riverside Scotland's approach to complaints handling

3.3 Three Definitive Steps

Our scrutiny review had three definitive steps for each exercise carried out:

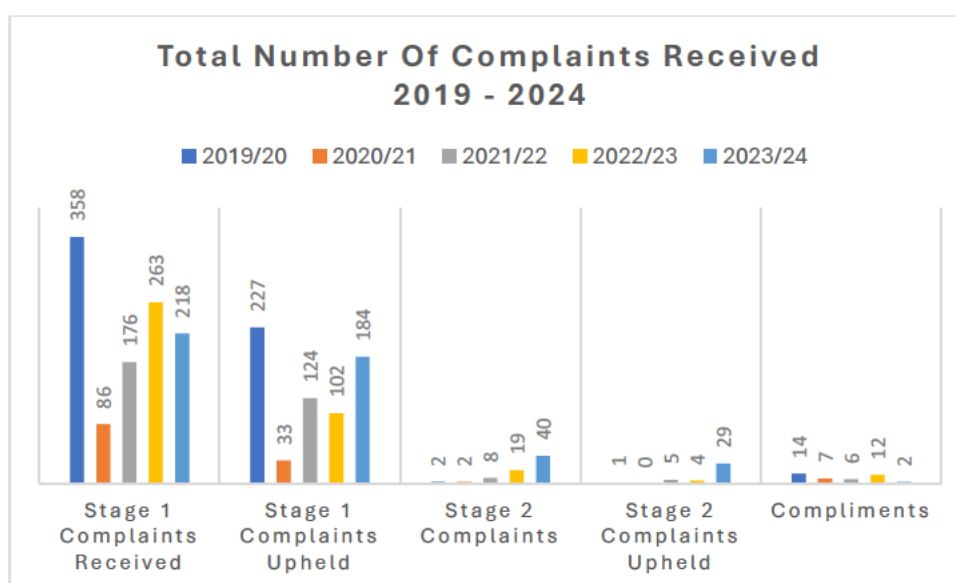
- Summary (outline of the methods we used and background information)
- Findings (key findings throughout the process)
- Positive points (good practice points)

4. Key Findings and Positive Practice

4.1 Complaints Performance

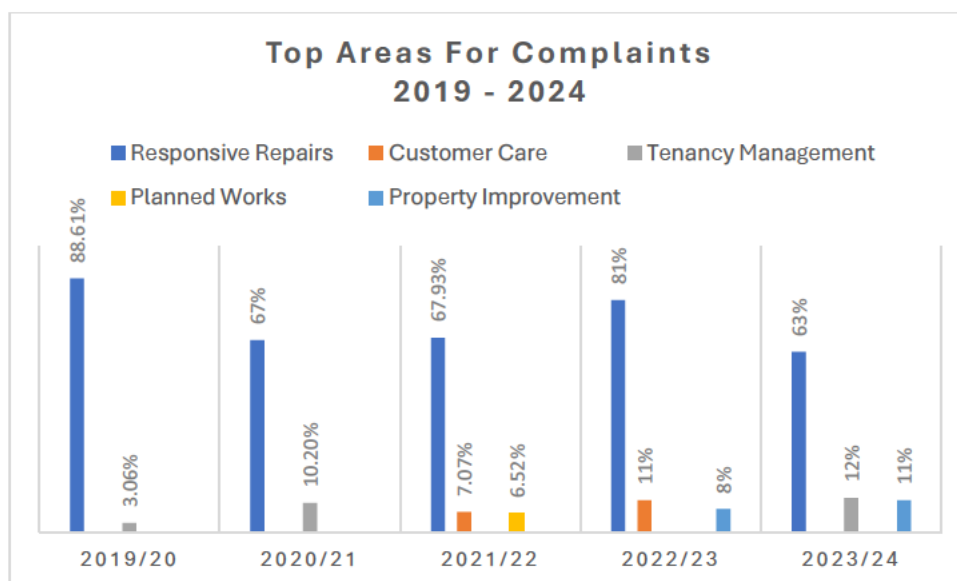
In recent years, Riverside Scotland has seen an increase in the overall number of complaints they have received from customers. Specifically, there has been an increase in the number of Stage 2 Complaints that have been made by customers. Over the last few years, the number of Stage 1 Complaints that have been received has increased from 176 in 2021/22 to 218 in 2023/24. A large proportion of this increase is made up of Stage 2 Complaints – increasing from 8 in 2021/22 to 40 in 2023/24.

Chart 1: Riverside Scotland's complaints performance 2019 – 2024



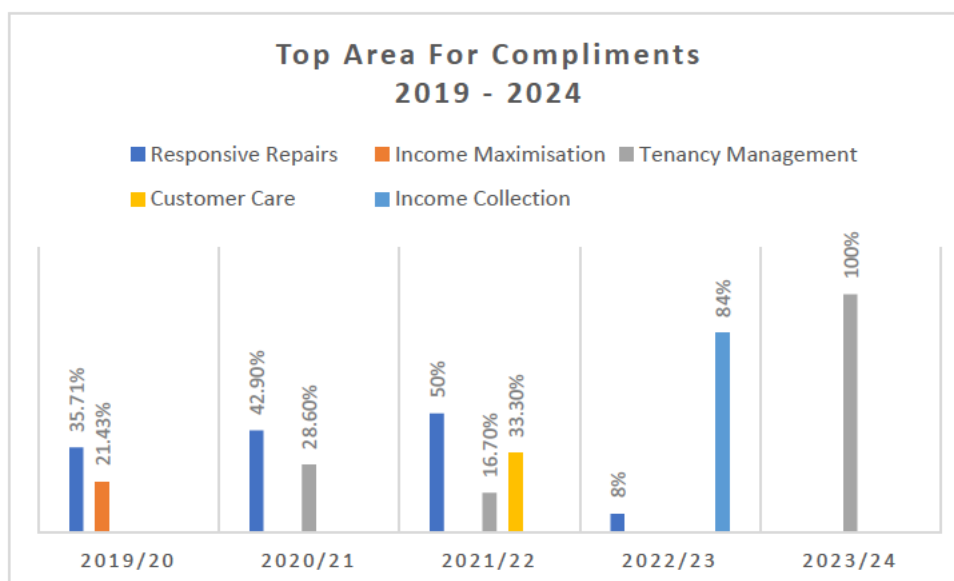
During 2019/20 to 2020/21, the number of complaints received by Riverside Scotland drastically decreased. This could possibly be attributed to the Covid-19 measures that were in place, limiting contact and repair works that were able to be carried out in customers' homes. As restrictions started to ease from 2021 onwards, it can be seen from this table, that the number of complaints Riverside Scotland received, started to increase.

Chart 2: Top Areas for Complaints 2019 – 2024



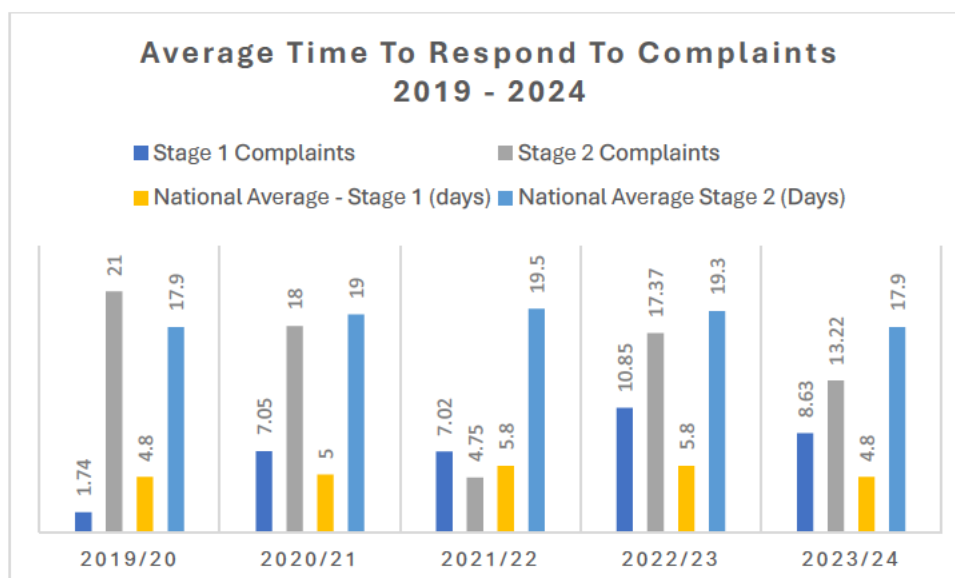
Responsive Repairs continues to be the top area for complaints that Riverside Scotland receives from customers.

Chart 3: Top Areas for Compliments 2019 – 2024



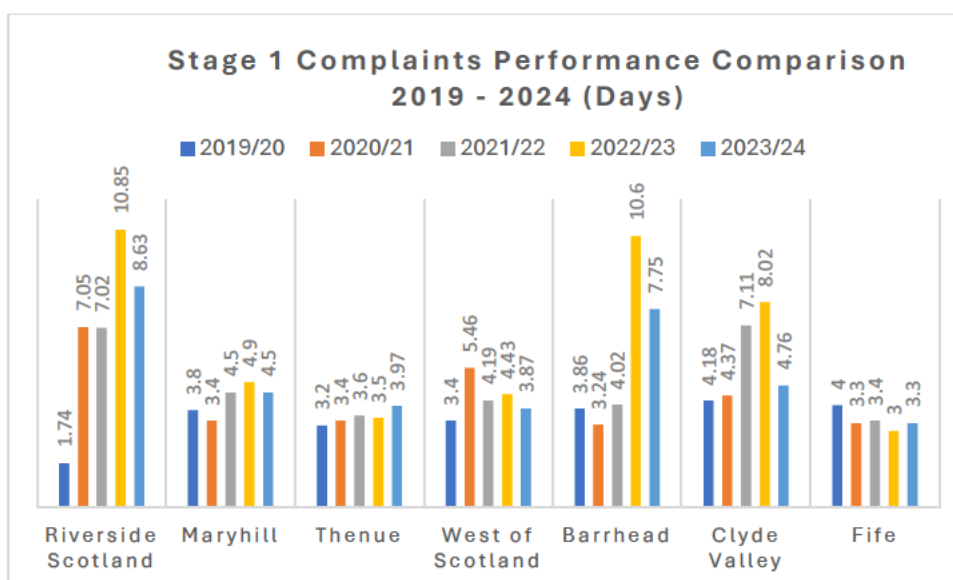
Riverside Scotland received compliments, which is when customers have noted that they have received a good service and have provided feedback to Riverside Scotland about this. The table shows several service areas have received compliments from customers in recent years.

Chart 4: Average length of time for Riverside Scotland to respond to complaints, in comparison with the national average from 2019 – 2024



Riverside Scotland's response times in relation to complaints have increased in recent years. However, the average time to respond to stage 2 complaints remains lower than the national average in recent years. The average time to respond to stage 1 complaints has consistently increased in recent years and is now longer than the national average.

Chart 5: Peer group comparison of stage 1 complaints response times performance

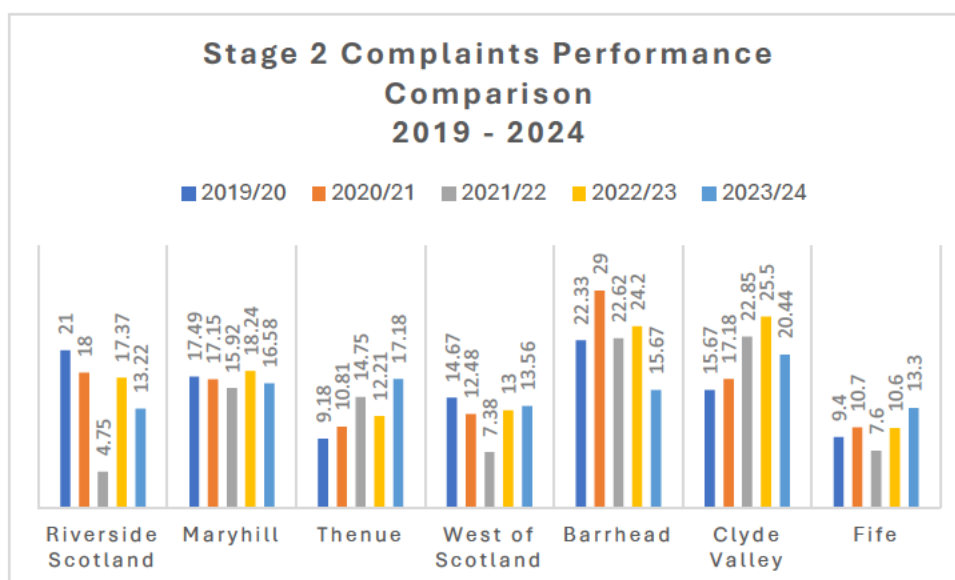


As can be seen from the comparisons above, Riverside Scotland average response time to stage 1 complaints have increased and is higher than others in their peer group.

The tables above illustrates that the number of complaints Riverside Scotland has received has increased in recent years. As well as this,

response times to complaints has also increased, and remains high in comparison with their peer group and the Scottish average.

Chart 6: Peer group comparison of stage 2 complaints response times performance



From reviewing this table, the average length of time it takes Riverside Scotland to respond to stage 2 complaints has fluctuated in recent years but has been within the target timeframe of 20 working days for the last four years. In comparison with others in the peer group, their performance remains similar.

4.2.1 Complaints Policy

The SIG undertook a review of Riverside Scotland's Complaints Policy together with a desktop study and comparison of peer group landlords, such as Almond, Clyde Valley, Maryhill, Thenue and West of Scotland.

The following points were noted for consideration:

- Riverside Scotland's current Complaints Policy is available on the website.
- The Complaints Policy reviewed by the SIG was developed and implemented under Riverside Scotland in October 2023.
- The SIG reviewed our Complaints Policy and highlighted that it was clear, concise and easy to understand. They felt it was clearly outlined how customers could raise a complaint, and what they should expect from the process.

- When compared to other Complaints Policies, Riverside Scotland's was similar in a lot of ways. This could be due to most Housing Associations aligning with the SPSO guidelines.

4.2.2 Information and Advice Available to Tenants

The SIG undertook a review of the Riverside Scotland's Complaints Policy, communications with tenants and the information available on their website.

The following points were noted for consideration:

- New tenants are provided with a copy of the Riverside Scotland's 'Welcome to your home' tenants handbook, which includes information on how tenants can make a complaint or provide feedback.
- The SIG suggested that Riverside Scotland provide more information in their newsletters about how customers can make a complaint, as not everyone will have access to the website or retains their tenant handbook.
- The SIG highlighted that there is no reference to how customers can request communication about their complaint in an alternative format for those with accessibility needs.

4.3 Complaints Case Studies

Members of the SIG carried out a case study review of a random sample of complaints that had been resolved at various stages (Stage 1, Stage 2 and escalated to the Ombudsman).

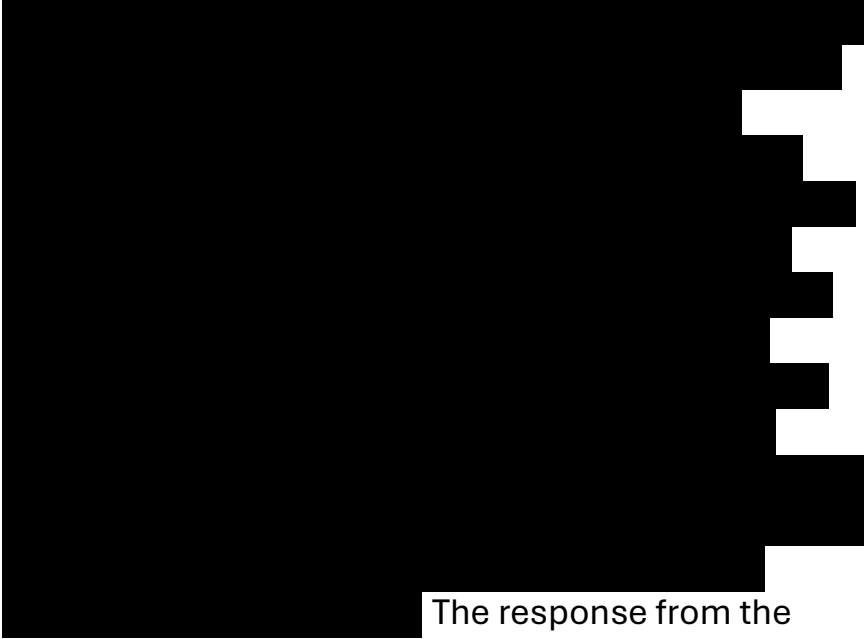
The findings captured by the SIG were as follows:

Complaints	Points for consideration
Example 1 – Stage 1 Complaint	Customer raised a complaint as the required follow up works hadn't taken place following their initial repair being completed. [REDACTED]

Findings	<p>The SIG found that this complaint arose due to a breakdown in communication and that this could have been prevented.</p> <p>The SIG also queried why follow on works weren't raised, what process is in place for follow on works and how can Riverside Scotland be sure jobs aren't being lost.</p>
Example 2 – Stage 1 Complaint	<p>Customer raised a complaint</p> <p>The Complaints Officer investigated</p> <p>he complaint was partially upheld, an apology issued and then resolved.</p>

Findings	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>The SIG also felt that Riverside Scotland should be checking investment works on completion and queried whether Riverside Scotland have a post inspection procedure in place and if there is target for these inspections.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
Example 3 – Stage 2 Complaint	<p>Customer raised a Stage 2 complaint in relation to the time it had taken to follow up on their initial Stage 1 Complaint. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>This complaint was upheld as the time taken to follow up on the Stage One complaint was lengthy. The Head of Asset was working with the Asset Officer to resolve the issues for the customer [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
Findings	<p>[REDACTED]</p>

	<p>██████████ The SIG highlighted their previous scrutiny exercise around voids, and that they hoped this issue would be addressed as part of this. The SIG also felt that the customer waited far too long for their complaint to be addressed. The SIG were pleased to hear that work was ongoing to resolve the complaint.</p>
Example 4 – Stage 2 Complaint	<p>Customer raised a Stage 2 complaint due to the length of time it had taken to follow up on their Stage 1 complaint. ██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████ The Complaints Officer investigated the complaint and found that the stage one complaint response did not resolve the issues the customer had reported. ██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████ The complaint was resolved at stage 2 and an apology issued. This complaint was fully upheld.</p>
Findings	<p>The SIG agreed with this complaint being fully upheld and fed back that they felt the contractor took too long to resolve the issues, and that in these cases, staff/contractors need to be held responsible.</p>
Example 5 – Ombudsman Complaint	<p>Customer had escalated their complaint to the Ombudsman as they had exhausted Riverside Scotland’s complaints procedure, they had raised a Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint and didn’t accept the resolution offered. ██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p>

	 <p>The response from the SPSO was that the customer's complaint wasn't one they would take forward. This was because it was their view that Riverside Scotland provided a reasonable response to the complaint and further consideration by their office would be unlikely to achieve anything further of significance for the customer.</p>
Findings	The SIG fed back that this complaint could have been resolved sooner, and that Riverside Scotland could have made more effort to follow up at earlier stages.

From their review, the SIG noted that several of these complaints had been escalated due to follow on works not being logged and/or completed in a timely manner. They also noted that on several occasions, communication could have been better and could have prevented issues being escalated to complaints. The SIG acknowledge that their recommendations should reflect ways in which these issues could be addressed, to resolve complaints sooner.

4.4 Staff Discussions

The SIG agreed a range of questions to be used to collate qualitative feedback from Riverside Scotland staff involved throughout the complaints process. Five members of staff from across Housing and Asset management, participated in tenant-led discussions on 24th February 2025.

A full breakdown of responses is outlined within *Appendix 2*, however the following key points were noted:

Challenges:

- Historic communications from Riverside Scotland – outlining what planned maintenance works would be carried out, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the period following this. There have been delays to planned maintenance programmes because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which might mean that customers wait longer than they have been advised for planned maintenance works.
- Getting customers to engage with Riverside Scotland to resolve their complaint. For example, customer could raise complaint, then Riverside Scotland is unable to engage with them after this so makes it difficult to discuss resolution and closure of complaint.
- Contractor failings are a challenge, particularly in relation to communication – for example appointments being made and not communicated to the customer. Another challenge relating to this, is communication between Riverside Scotland and contractors when it comes to resolving complaints within the timeframes.
- Managing expectations, for example where a customer wants us to do something that we can't, this can be challenging to manage and to resolve the complaint.
- Challenging to resolve complaints, in line with the processes and legislation – specifically within timeframes.

Suggestions for Improvement: One of the steps we could take to improve our approach to complaints handling would be to improve communication. One example of this would be our communication in relation to repairs and follow on works.

- It was highlighted that there has been a trend in complaints that could have been resolved at first point of contact with CSC. In some cases, CSC have been too quick to raise a complaint rather than take ownership of the issue at the initial point of contact.

Streamlined approach to all complaints:

The SIG discussed whether persistent complainers get preferential treatment:

- Don't believe customers who persistently complain get any preferential treatment, and that from a policy perspective, all customers are treated equally. There is a caveat to this, if Riverside Scotland have received multiple complaints about a component (e.g. kitchen, bathroom) from a customer, this complaints data could be taken into consideration when planning a programme of works.
- A recent example where the customer has complained several times, through various channels. This complaint was progressed to the Ombudsman but there was no difference to the outcome.

4.5 Customer Feedback

The SIG reviewed the customer satisfaction data that is recorded through text message surveys, that are sent to customers following contact with Riverside Scotland. Data was collected from the past 12 months, looking at customers satisfaction with the handling of their complaints.

The following feedback was noted:

Of the 31 respondents to answer the question “Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your complaint was handled? Please think about the overall handling of your complaint rather than the outcome”. The responses were as follows:

39% answered “Very Satisfied”

3% answered “Fairly Satisfied”

6% answered “Neither satisfied or dissatisfied”

13% answered “Fairly Dissatisfied”

39% answered “Very Dissatisfied”

Of the 27 respondents to answer the question “Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the final outcome of your complaint?”

22% answered “Very Satisfied”

11% answered “Fairly Satisfied”

7% answered “Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied”

15% answered “Fairly Dissatisfied”

45% answered “Very Dissatisfied”

Of the 26 respondents to answer the question “And how easy or difficult did you find it to get your complaint resolved? Please think about how easy or difficult it was to get your complaint resolved rather than the outcome”.

23% answered “Very easy”

11.5% answered “Fairly easy”

4% answered “Neither easy nor difficult”

11.5% answered “Fairly difficult”

50% answered “Very difficult”

**Finally, respondents answered the question “How could Riverside Scotland have improved the way that your complaint was handled?”
Some of the responses were:**

“It has not been handled at all. This is the first response I have had to it as far as I'm concerned, it has not even been investigated and no one has been in touch with me prior to these messages, it has not been closed at your end without anything having been done.”

“To be honest the person who handled my complaint was fantastic he kept me informed all the way through the process”

“Well Ann-Marie was brilliant think the biggest problem was no communication with Bells no one listened apart from Ann Marie you had good person on your team”

“More communication with myself, wasn’t consulted regarding the replacement Door style, colour etc very disappointing treatment as someone who has lived in the same property for nearly 30 years!

“Seemed as though I wasn't considered worthy of a constructive meaningful dialogue, plenty of apologies when I was able to get to speak with someone but very limited & slow reaction to the real issue I as a tenant was facing”.

4.6 What the Service Improvement Group Liked

Throughout the Complaints Scrutiny Exercise, SIG members identified good practice and information including:

- ✓ Riverside Scotland staff involved in the scrutiny project were helpful and informative.
- ✓ Riverside Scotland staff involved in the scrutiny project appeared to be committed and passionate about their jobs.
- ✓ Riverside Scotland provided information requested and additional information when required.
- ✓ The Complaints Policy is publicly accessible via the Riverside Scotland website.
- ✓ On paper, the Complaints Policy is easy to understand, written in plain English and covers a basic level of detail.
- ✓ Riverside Scotland carry out “lessons learned” sessions after every Stage 2 complaint and complex Stage 1 complaints to look at how improvements could be made to prevent future complaints.
- ✓ Riverside Scotland’s communications with customers about their complaints is clear, concise and easy to understand. It also includes an apology to the customer.
- ✓ Riverside Scotland have recruited a Complaints Officer who will be a single point of contact for customers in relation to their complaints.

5. Recommendations

The SIG have found this scrutiny exercise to be invaluable in understanding Riverside Scotland’s Complaints Policy and complaints processes. The SIG would like Riverside Scotland to consider the following recommendations.

Findings	Recommendations
The number of stage 1 complaints, and subsequent stage 2 complaints received has increased in recent years.	1. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland continue to monitor and review the number of complaints they receive and aim to respond within policy timescales, benchmarking against similar sized RSL’s for comparison.
The length of time for Riverside Scotland to respond to Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints was higher than	2. The SIG notes that there is now a Complaints Officer in post – providing a single point of contact for customers.

<p>other HAs that were reviewed as part of the scrutiny exercise.</p>	<p>However, they note that our average time to resolve stage 1 complaints is higher than other RSL's. The SIG recommend that Riverside Scotland continue to monitor and review response times, with the aim of responding to all complaints within the specified timeframes. If an extension is required, then Riverside Scotland must ensure that there is a justification and a process for this.</p>
<p>The SIG reviewed our communications with customers about their complaint and found that these were clear and concise and contain the information required. The SIG noted the importance of apologising to customers within our letters. The SIG noted that there was no information within the letter on how to request letters in another format (accessible, translation etc).</p>	<p>3. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland continue to acknowledge all complaints in writing through the complaints Officer and include a section in our written correspondence on how customers can request communication in an accessible format, as this is currently missing from the complaint's correspondence. The Complaints Policy does outline the ways in which Riverside Scotland can communicate with customers, to meet their accessibility needs.</p>
<p>The SIG found that it can be difficult to get in touch with Tenant Partner's. Specifically in relation to when Tenant Partners are on annual leave or not at work. Customers aren't always aware of this, and their queries don't get picked up.</p>	<p>4. The SIG recommends that Tenant Partners update their voicemail message when going on planned leave – to advise customers that they are on leave and provide information about who they should contact in their absence. The SIG also recommends that Riverside</p>

	Scotland investigate implementing a system whereby if a Tenant Partner doesn't answer the phone, the call will be redirected, to ensure calls are answered promptly and to prevent complaints.
The SIG were happy with Riverside Scotland's approach to contacting customers about their complaint. However, the SIG felt that there could be more regular contact, even if there is no update on the customers complaint, to re-assure customers that they haven't been forgotten about and that their complaint is still being investigated.	5. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland contact customers regularly throughout their complaint, regardless of having an update, with agreement from the customer. The SIG feel that regular contact would reassure customers that their complaint is being investigated. The SIG recommend contacting a complainant every 2-3 days.
The SIG noted that Riverside Scotland's wider communications and information about complaints, on our website, was clear but raised that not everyone uses the website or has access to the internet.	6. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland do an annual spotlight on complaints within the tenant newsletter and provide information for customers on how to raise a complaint within other communications to ensure this information reaches as many customers as possible.
The SIG found that there are several ways in which customers can raise a complaint with us, and that Riverside Scotland will respond by phone or in writing. However, they noted that face-to-face appointments weren't as standard, being offered to customers.	7. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland offer customers the option to discuss their complaint face-to-face, to ensure that customers can communicate with us in the way that best suits them and their needs.

<p>The SIG welcomed that Riverside Scotland had now recruited a Complaints Officer, who would respond to, investigate and resolve customer complaints. They believe having that single point of contact would improve customer satisfaction and would increase complaints performance. The SIG were concerned about interruptions to this service if/when the Complaints Officer was off work, on annual leave or attending meetings or events.</p>	<p>8. The SIG recommend that Riverside Scotland look to recruit another Complaints Officer or Assistant, on a part-time or full-time basis to work alongside the current Complaints Officer, to ensure that the workload is manageable and that there is always a Complaints Officer available to investigate complaints.</p>
<p>The SIG found a trend in complaints relating to delays with follow on works and poor communication from staff and contractor.</p>	<p>9. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland review their current process or implement a new process to track follow on works that are required, to ensure that these are completed within a reasonable timeframes and customers are kept informed of progress.</p>
<p>From their case studies, the SIG highlighted instances where a contractor failure had led to a complaint. The SIG were keen to ensure that contractor performance was monitored, and poor performance is tackled.</p>	<p>10. The SIG are keen to understand what KPIs contractors have and that contractor KPIs are monitored, and that contractor performance is shared with customers.</p>
<p>The SIG were concerned that members of the CSC weren't handling calls properly and complaints were logged when it should have been a front-line enquiry.</p>	<p>11. The SIG recommend that Riverside Scotland undertake analysis of complaints to establish any gaps in learning within the CSC and address these.</p>
<p>From the staff discussions, the SIG were concerned to learn of instances where repair appointments haven't been</p>	<p>12. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland review the contract in place with repairs contractor(s) to clarify what</p>

communicated to the customer, which can lead to missed appointments, and further lead to a complaint.	communication has been agreed around appointments and reminding customers about appointments. Is there KPIs in place linked to appointments and unacceptable levels of upheld complaints?
From the case studies, the SIG highlighted that customers who have new windows installed, and as a result their blinds no longer fit the window openings, may not be in a financial position to replace these blinds. These works are essential for Riverside Scotland to improve their homes but could have a financial impact on customers.	<p>13. The SIG recommends that Riverside Scotland consider replacing customers blinds if they won't fit the new window opening. They acknowledged that these works are essential and will provide benefits to customers. However, they feel this shouldn't have a financial impact on customers, and that some customers may not be able to afford replacements.</p> <p>14. The SIG were also keen to understand what communication is given to tenants in relation to investment works e.g. is there a letter or booklet explaining the work, how long it will take, how the property will be left, when work will be inspected and if any compensation for damage to décor or disturbance is awarded etc</p>

6. Conclusion

The SIG would like to thank all staff who assisted our members to carry out this scrutiny exercise through providing information and presentations and arranging complaints case studies, staff discussions and customer feedback. This has been invaluable to the SIG, and staff are to be commended for their commitment to the process.

We trust our recommendations will deliver improvements in the complaints handling process for Riverside Scotland and its customers.

7. Next Steps and Timetable

The SIG considered and agreed a draft of this report in June 2025 and the final agreed report with tenant recommendations was submitted to Riverside Scotland. Thereafter meetings will take place to allow:

- » The SIG to present key findings and recommendations to the Riverside Scotland Board in July 2025.
- » Riverside Scotland to meet with the SIG to discuss the Riverside Scotland response, present and agree specific actions to the recommendations at a meeting in August 2025.
- » The SIG to agree the actions required to publicise their work of the scrutiny project and attract new members.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is essential that this scrutiny project is monitored and evaluated to find out if agreed objectives have been met, to recognise what works well and what may need to be adapted to meet the changing needs and priorities of Riverside Scotland and its customers.

This is about evaluating the effectiveness of the scrutiny project itself but also monitoring the implementation of the agreed action plan has been carried out.

The SIG recommend that an exercise to review the action plan takes place in June 2026.

9. Contact

To discuss anything within this report, please contact TIS on the details below:

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E: gavin.wiffen@riverside.org.uk

T: 07970 348 724

Appendix One – Service Improvement Group Membership

The Service Improvement Group provides the opportunity to have a core membership of up to 15 participants. Any Riverside Scotland tenants or customers (i.e. homelessness service user, factored owners, etc.) can become a member of the group.

Where possible, the membership of the Service Improvement Group should reflect and recognise the existence and importance of the different ages, races, genders, abilities and lifestyles within our communities to ensure that no group or individual will be disadvantaged. Support workers or carers of Service Improvement Group members are also entitled to attend meetings and take part in scrutiny activities.

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Appendix Two – Complaints Scrutiny Exercise: Tenant-Led Staff Discussions

Discussion Preparation

Gavin Wiffen will meet with the Service Improvement Group (SIG), prior to staff discussions, to support with preparations and understand the format, questions and outcomes.

Discussion Roles

- A nominated SIG member will welcome everyone, introduce the discussion session and set the scene.
- SIG members will ask the questions.
- SIG members should not use the discussion to identify or discuss personal circumstances
- Gavin Wiffen will take the notes of the session.
- A nominated SIG member will thank staff for their participation.

Complaints Scrutiny Exercise: Tenant-led Staff Discussions – Questions

██████████ (Assets Operations Manager)

1. Please can you tell us about your role in the complaints process within Riverside Scotland?

- Line manages the Complaints Officer.
- Provides support to the Complaints Officer to investigate and resolve complaints.
- Lead Officer on Stage 2 Complaints relating to Asset.
- ██████████ outlined the process of complaints being logged and provided information on the timeframes to respond to complaints.
- Query was raised about post work inspections – ██████████ advised that an inspection of works does take place, when there has been a complaint to ensure that works have been carried out to a satisfactory level to resolve a complaint.

2. What are some of the challenges Riverside Scotland experience with complaints handling?

- ██████████ advised one of the main challenges is historic communications from Riverside Scotland – outlining what planned maintenance we intended to carry out, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the period following this. For example, Riverside Scotland may have communicated that it intended to start planned works but now has not been able to, due to Covid-19 and the impact this had. This presents challenges in the sense customers may have been told certain works would be carried out within a set timeframe, but haven't, leading to complaints.
- ██████████ also advised that it can be difficult to get customers to engage with Riverside Scotland to resolve their complaint – for example, customer could raise complaint, then Riverside Scotland is unable to engage with them after this so makes it difficult to discuss resolution and closure of complaint. To counter this, a proposed resolution will be sent to the customer and complaint closed.

- [REDACTED] also highlighted that contractor failings are a challenge, particularly in relation to communication – for example appointments being made and not communicated to the customer. Another challenge relating to this, is communication between Riverside Scotland and contractors when it comes to resolving complaints within the timeframes.
- [REDACTED] stressed the importance of honesty and keeping customer informed, in that usually, customers will be understanding of delays or missed appointments, if they are kept up to date.

3. How could Riverside Scotland improve their approach to complaints – to increase satisfaction with complaints handling and reduce the overall number of complaints raised?

- [REDACTED] advised that we have seen improvement in complaints handling satisfaction, since we recruited a full time Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer is now a single point of contact for customers, and responsible for investigating and responding to complaints. This is improving stats and customer feedback has improved.
- The Complaints Officer is also reflecting on complaints, and implementing improvements, with the aim of reducing complaints and improving communication between contractors and customers. One example of this is the follow-on works tracker, to ensure that any follow-on works are being monitored and completed.
- [REDACTED] also highlighted that there has been a trend in complaints that could have been resolved at first point of contact with CSC. [REDACTED] advised that in some cases, CSC have been too quick to raise a complaint rather than take ownership of the issue at the initial point of contact. This is something that needs to be looked at.
- [REDACTED] queried whether Riverside Scotland should recruit a second Complaints Officer. [REDACTED] advised he doesn't think so, and that Riverside Scotland have seen improvements but now need to focus on processes to ensure customers get a better service.

- [REDACTED] asked how many complaints have been progressed to the Ombudsman. [REDACTED] advised that there have been 3 in the past 12 months, and that none of these have been upheld.

4. Do you think customers who repeatedly complain, or those who “shout the loudest” get quicker responses or preferential treatment, when dealing with their complaint?

- [REDACTED] fed back that he doesn’t believe customers who “shout the loudest” get any preferential treatment, and that from a policy perspective, all customers are treated equally. There is a caveat to this, if we have received multiple complaints about a component (e.g. kitchen, bathroom) from a customer, this complaints data could be taken into consideration when planning a programme of works.
- [REDACTED] asked about complaints Riverside Scotland receive around Aids & Adaptions. [REDACTED] advised it has been challenging to manage Aids & Adaptions, as Government Funding has been cut in this area, but demand for these kinds of works has increased. [REDACTED] explained how the funding for this works, in that works would be carried out over the year, and funding claimed to cover this, with there being a shortfall in recent years.

5. Are you aware of what level of input Board has in relation to complaints?

- [REDACTED] advised that in relation to complaints, the role of the Board is to monitor KPIs, performance and policies.
- [REDACTED] asked if there could be input from Board to increase satisfaction. Stephen advised he believes there could be potential for this, and could look at providing Board with more knowledge around complaints and more detail around the type of complaints we’re receiving.
- [REDACTED] advised that complaints performance is discussed at Operational Manager’s meetings, where the CO provides an update on current performance and challenges, perhaps there could be potential to provide the same information to the Board.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, are there any further comments you'd like to make about Riverside Scotland's approach to complaints handling?

- [REDACTED] advised we are aiming to continuously improve our approach to complaints, and we are looking at changes and improvements that could be made, to increase satisfaction.

Complaints Scrutiny Exercise: Tenant-led Staff Discussions – Questions

■■■■■ (Housing Manager) & ■■■■■ (Tenant Partner)

1. Please can you tell us about your role in the complaints process within Riverside Scotland?

- ■■■■■ outlined her role – she is the Housing Manager and oversees support and tenancy sustainment.
- ■■■■■ provides advice and support to Complaints Officer, in relation to housing related complaints.
- ■■■■■ advised that she investigates and responds to stage 2 complaints, relating to housing. ■■■■■ provided an example of a complaint in relation to a Mutual Exchange – as the type of complaints she would deal with.
- ■■■■■ advised that she picks up complaints for her “patch” in ■■■■■ absence. She would contact the customer, investigate and resolve complaints, outlining a proposed resolution. This can be confirmed in writing for the customer.

2. What are some of the challenges Riverside Scotland experience with complaints handling?

- ■■■■■ advised one of the main challenges is managing expectations, for example where a customer wants us to do something that we can’t, this can be challenging to manage and to resolve the complaint.
- ■■■■■ also advised that it can be challenging to resolve complaints, in line with the processes and legislation – specifically within timeframes.
- ■■■■■ advised her main challenges are in relation to managing customer expectations and communication – this could be communication between us and the customer, and between us and contractors.

3. How could Riverside Scotland improve their approach to complaints – to increase satisfaction with complaints handling and reduce the overall number of complaints raised?

- [REDACTED] advised one of the steps we could take to improve our approach to complaints handling would be to improve communication and gave the example of our communication in relation to repairs – this could be improved.
- [REDACTED] provided an example, where a repair is raised, and contractor can't complete the works in full at the initial appointment (for example an emergency line where we would carry out "make safe" works). In these cases, follow on works may be required, and this isn't always properly communicated to customers, leading to complaints when the works haven't been completed at the initial appointment or when the contractor re-attends to complete the works, but the customer wasn't aware and isn't home to allow access.
- [REDACTED] added that communication does appear to be an issue and advised this is challenging for customers who may have taken time off work to be there for appointments. If contractors don't arrive, they'd need to take more time off.

4. Do you think customers who repeatedly complain, or those who "shout the loudest" get quicker responses or preferential treatment, when dealing with their complaint?

- [REDACTED] advised that this doesn't happen, and that all customers are treated the same in line with our complaints policy.
- [REDACTED] advised of a recent example where the customer has complained several times, through various channels. This complaint was progressed to the Ombudsman but there was no difference to the outcome.
- [REDACTED] asked if we follow up with the contractor in cases where a customer has complained about the same repair issue several times. [REDACTED] advised this is something that would be fed back to the Asset Manager to discuss at operational meetings with the contractors.

- [REDACTED] advised that she agreed with what [REDACTED] has said, and that she doesn't believe customers who repeatedly complain or shout the loudest get preferential treatment.
- [REDACTED] advised that we have an Acceptable Behaviour Policy in place to deal with aggression or repeated unwarranted complaints.
- [REDACTED] also advised that we have looked at ways to engage with customers, to try and deal with issues before they become complaints – for example, through the customer drop ins we previously ran.

5. Are you aware of what level of input Board has in relation to complaints?

- [REDACTED] advised that Board's role in relation to complaints is to monitor KPIs and performance and provide feedback.
- [REDACTED] advised that we have recently seen an increase in satisfaction with complaints handling performance.
- [REDACTED] queried whether it would be an option to have better information sharing with Board in relation to complaints and if we could provide regular reports on performance and provide more knowledge to Board around complaints.
- [REDACTED] advised that any complaints that are progressed to the Ombudsman are highlighted to the Board.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, are there any further comments you'd like to make about Riverside Scotland's approach to complaints handling?

- No further comments to add.