

Item No:

<b>Decision taking Body:</b>  <b>Service Delivery Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>  <b>May 2008</b>	<b>Title of Report:</b> <b>Annual Complaints Report 2007/08</b>
<b>Classification:</b>  <b>For General Circulation</b>		<b>Report of:</b> <b>Director of Customer Services</b>
<b>Policy Context</b>	<b>Excellent Customer Services</b>	
<b>Resident Involvement: No</b>		<b>Equalities Implications: No</b>
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	<b>No</b>	

**Report Outline:**

This report presents the complaints statistics for 2007/08 and provides an overview of the performance identifying key lessons learnt for the organisation.

**Report is for information only**

If you have any questions about this report please contact **Shafiara Muttalib-Mehra** on **020 7245 2066** or email **smuttalib@cwh.org.uk**

# Annual Complaints Report 2007/08

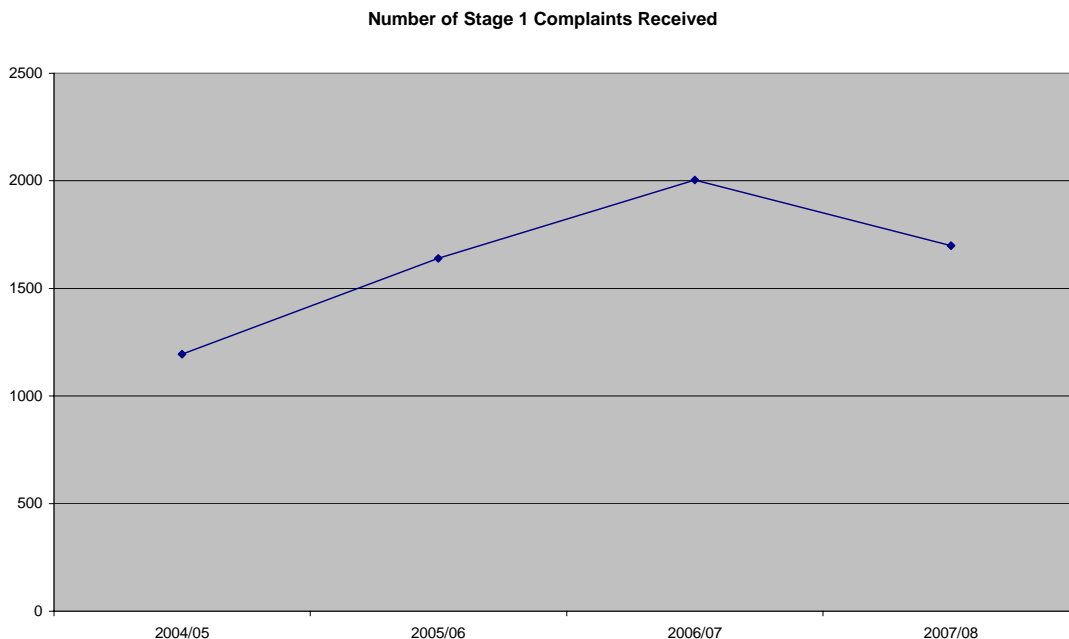
## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1 This report presents the complaints statistics for 2007/08 and provides an overview of key lessons learnt from complaints which have been used for service improvement. This report also provides a comparison of complaint performance for the fiscal years 2007/08 and 2006/07.

## 2. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

2.1 CityWest Homes (CWH) see complaints as an opportunity to learn from mistakes and improve service delivery. The recording of Stage 1 complaints is therefore encouraged and in recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received however in 2007/08 there has been a slight drop in this trend.

**Chart 1:** Trend analysis of the number of Stage 1 complaints received since 2004/05



2.2 The number of Stage 1 complaints received in 2007/08 has dropped by 15% compared to 2006/07. There are no obvious reasons for this reduction; the current Provider contracts have been in place since April 2006 and as part of the CWH corporate induction programme, which all new staff attend there is presentation on the complaints process.

2.3 In 2007/08, in order to continue to raise the profile of the complaints process and to ensure that residents can easily access the service, the complaints team have taken the following action:

- Attended residents events;

- Visited all teams that investigate Stage 1 complaints, this includes all Estate Teams and some in house teams; and
- Carried out workshops, including a lunch time workshop for staff focusing on complaints investigation techniques.

2.4 In order to reduce the escalation of complaints, escalation targets are set and teams must ensure that the escalation to the next stage of the complaints process does not exceed the target.

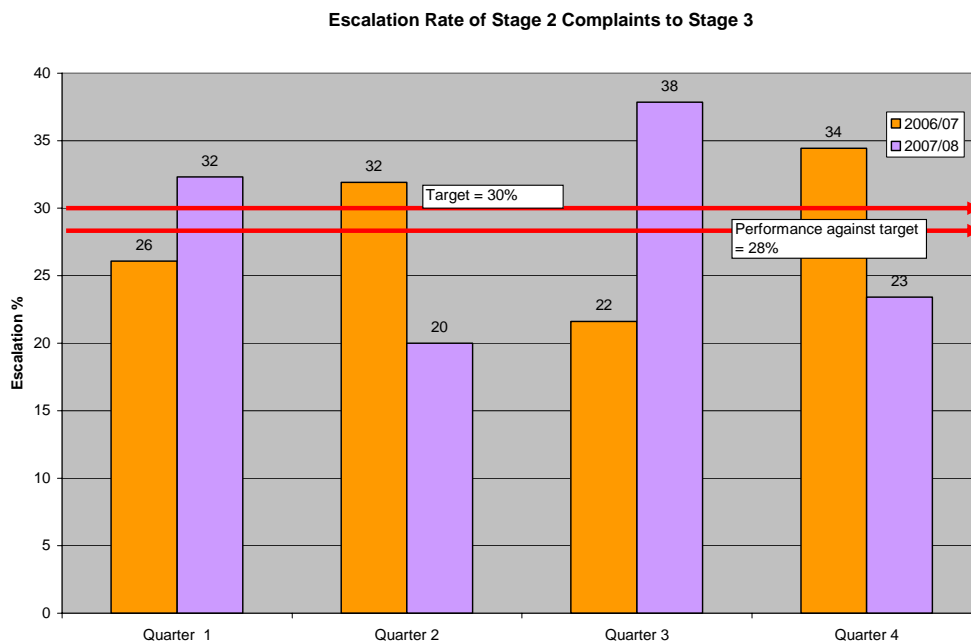
**Table 1:** Provides the target set for 2007/08 and the performance against that target

Stage	Target	Performance
Stage 1 to Stage 2 (target set by CWH)	10%	11%
Stage 2 to Stage 3 (target set by WCC)	30%	28%

2.5 In 2007/8 an escalation target was set individually for each Estate Team based on the total number of properties that they manage, however not all teams met the target (see point 5.9). The City wide performance against the target was 11%; this remains unchanged from the previous year.

2.6 The escalation target of 30% from Stage 2 to Stage 3 has been achieved.

**Chart 2:** Performance against City wide target



2.7 The overall escalation rate from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is similar to the performance in 2006/07 however the actual number of Stage 3 complaints has reduced by 9 complaints. The contributing factors to performing well against this target were:

- As part of the Stage 2 investigation process, review panel meetings are held to discuss responsive repair and major works complaints prior to finalising the Stage 2 response;
- CWH Complaints Manager and Westminster City Council's (WCC) Corporate Complaints Manager meet on a monthly basis to review all Stage 3 complaints and assess if anything further could have been done at Stage 2 to prevent the complaint from escalating;
- The layout of the Stage 2 response letter has changed and is now more easy to read and more customer focused; and
- Contact is made with the resident not only as part of the Stage 2 complaint investigation process but also after the Stage 2 response letter has been sent out.

2.8 The performance against the target to respond to complaints has improved at Stage 1 but dropped at Stage 2:

- Stage 1 – 93% of all complaints were completed within 10 working days, this has increased from 91% in the previous year
- Stage 2 - 25% of all complaints were completed within 10 working days, compared to 26% in 2006/07 (41% of all complaints were completed within 15 working days).

2.9 Two Stage 1 complaints handling audits were carried out and the results of the audits were linked to the provider incentive scheme. Both audits identified 2 key areas that need improvement:

- Inconsistency in the standard of responses - All line managers have to now show clear processes to ensure all responses are proof read.
- Customers not being kept informed of delays - If it is not possible to respond within the target time a holding letter should be sent to the customer to explain the reasons for the delay. This matter has been raised with senior managers and will be monitored closely.

2.10 Two postal complaints satisfaction surveys were completed. The survey measures the satisfaction with the way in which the complaint was handled at Stage 1 of the complaints process. The City wide average score in 2006/07 was 5 out of 10; in order to get a better understanding of why the score was below 7 a focus group, including residents who had given low scores, was held. The findings indicated that the scores generally depend on the outcome of the complaint rather than the actual handling of the complaint. The survey questions were reviewed with the residents however for both periods April 2007 to September 2007 and October 2007 to March 2008 the City wide average score was 4. More work is being carried out to target those customers that were least satisfied with the service.

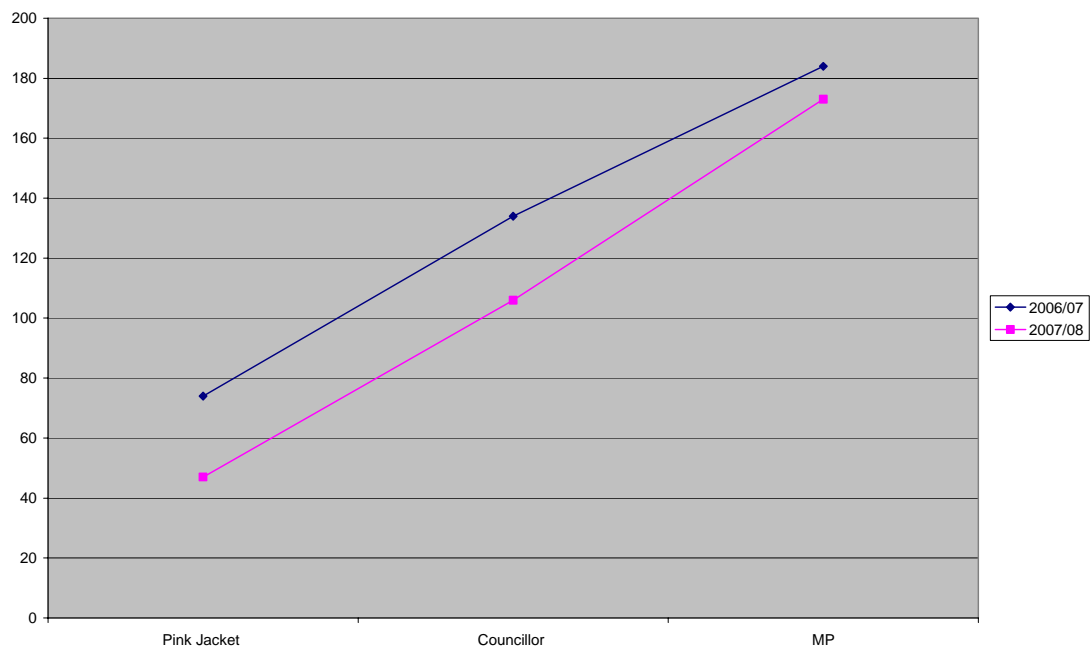
### 3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO)

3.1 CWH received 29 LGO enquiries compared to 50 LGO enquires in 2006/07. There have been no findings of maladministration<sup>1</sup> in this period and in 13 cases local settlements were decided. See point 5.13 for details of the amounts awarded.

### 4. PINK JACKETS & MEMBERS CORRESPONDENCE

4.1 CWH is required to produce draft responses for the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (known as Pink Jackets) and also respond to enquires from Councillors and MPs. The target to respond to such enquiries ranges from 3 to 10 working days.

**Chart 3:** Comparison of the number of Pink Jackets and Councillor & MP enquiries received in 2006/07 & 2007/08



4.2 The number of Pink Jacket enquires and Councillor and MP enquires received in 2007/08 has dropped by 17%.

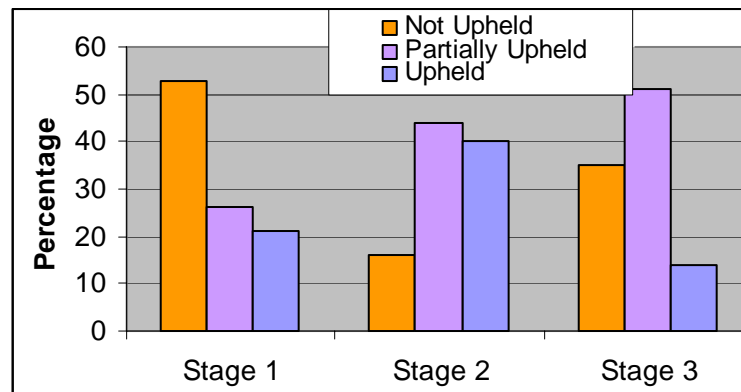
<sup>1</sup> LGO Website - There is no statutory definition of maladministration and little judicial authority on the subject. The main test of whether there has been maladministration is whether an authority has acted reasonably in accordance with the law, its own policies and generally accepted standards of local administration.

## 5. REVIEW OF ALL COMPLAINTS

### 5.1 Outcome of Investigation

The outcome of a complaint investigation can be of one of the following: not upheld, partially upheld or upheld.

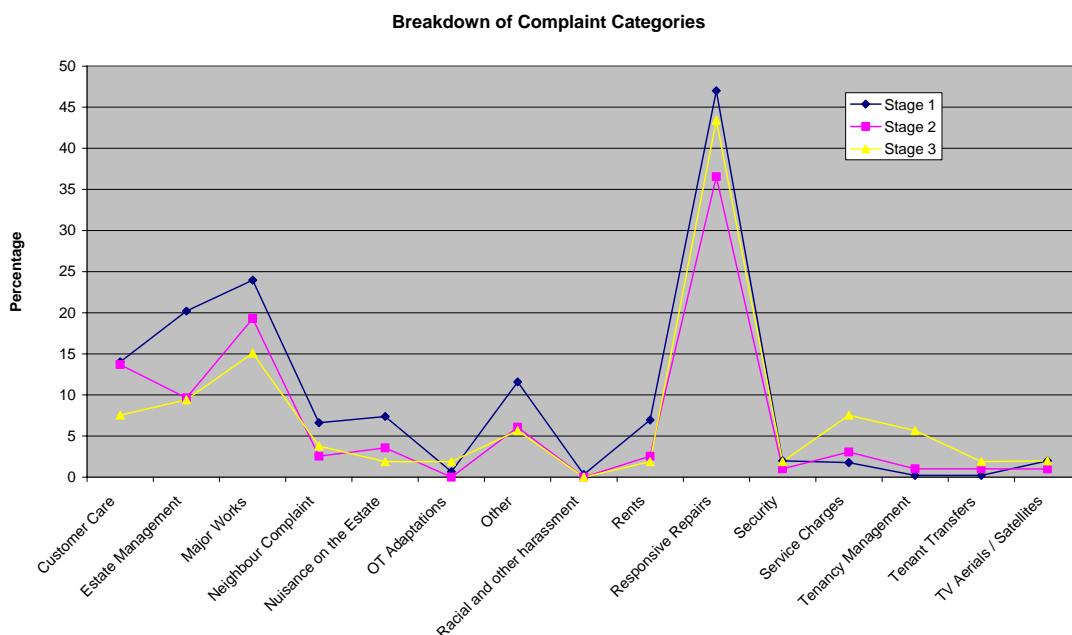
**Chart 4:** Outcome of investigations at each stage of the complaints procedure in 2007/08



5.2 At Stage 2 and Stage 3 most of the cases were partially upheld, this is in part because the original complaint issues usually develop into multiple issues as the complaint progresses to the next level. If one aspect of a complaint is either partially upheld or upheld, the overall outcome of the complaint is recorded as partially upheld.

### 5.3 Complaint Categories

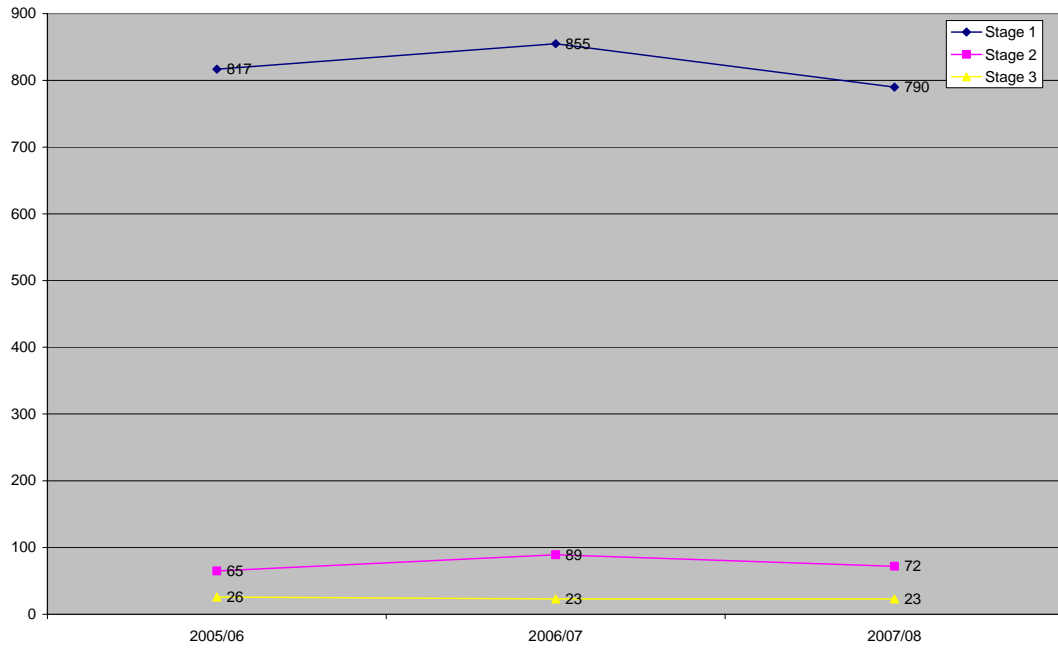
**Chart 5:** Presents a breakdown of complaint categories at all 3 stages



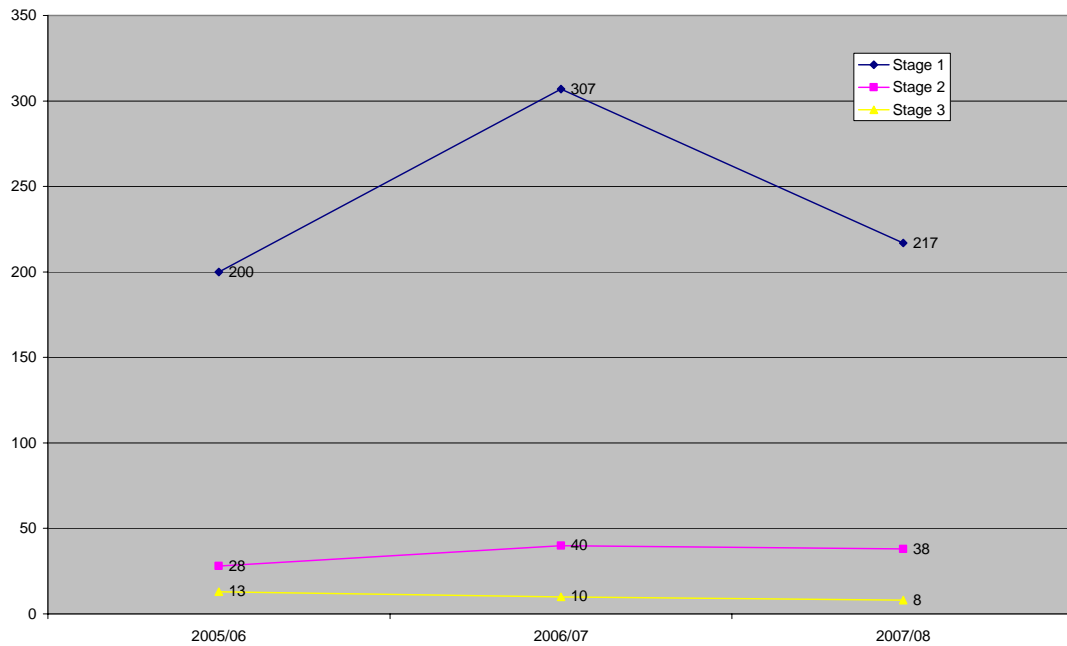
5.4 The highest percentage of complaints received at all stages concern

responsive repair and major works. However the actual number of responsive repair and major works complaints received at Stage 1 and Stage 2 in 2007/08 has dropped from the previous year.

**Chart 6:** Comparison of the number of responsive repair complaints received in 2007/08 and previous 2 years

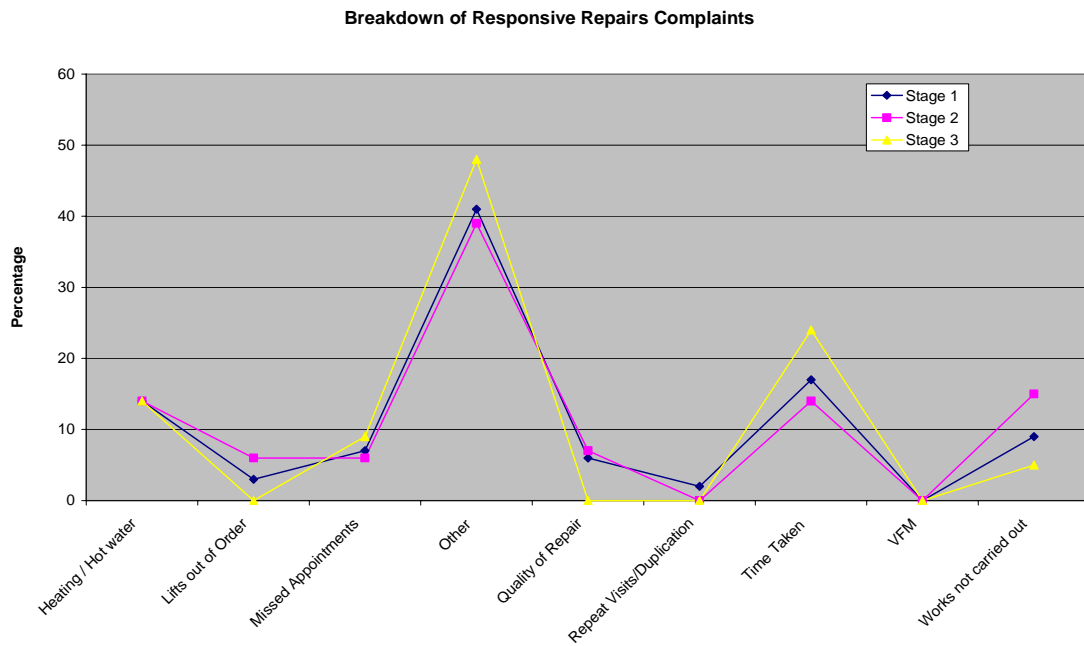


**Chart 7:** Comparison of the number of major works complaints received in 2007/08 and previous 2 years

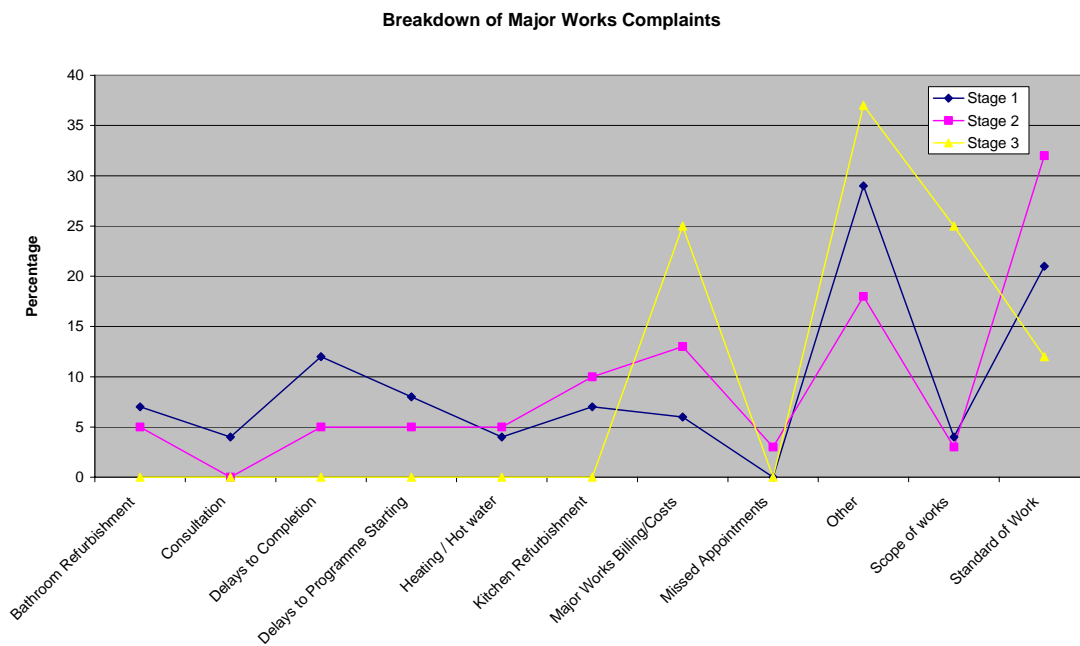


5.5 Responsive repair complaints and major works complaints are broken into further subcategories and Service Managers use the information as part of regular contract management meetings to assist in the assessment of contractor performance. Complaints is now a standing agenda item in most contract management meetings.

**Chart 8: Breakdown of Responsive Repair complaints**



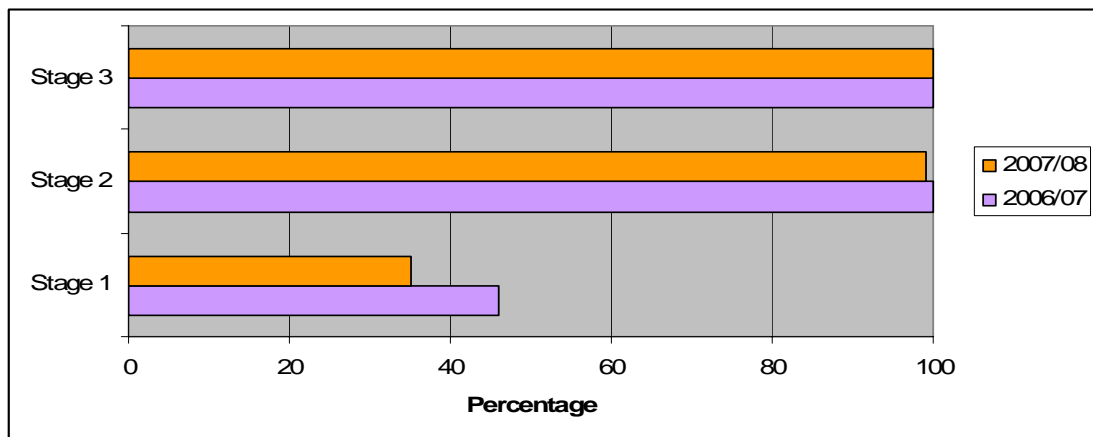
**Chart 9: Breakdown of Major Works complaints**



## 5.6 Recommendations

It is important that complaints are used as a learning tool and are resolved at the first stage of the complaints procedure. It is also important that where a mistake has been identified and a complaint is upheld a recommendation is made.

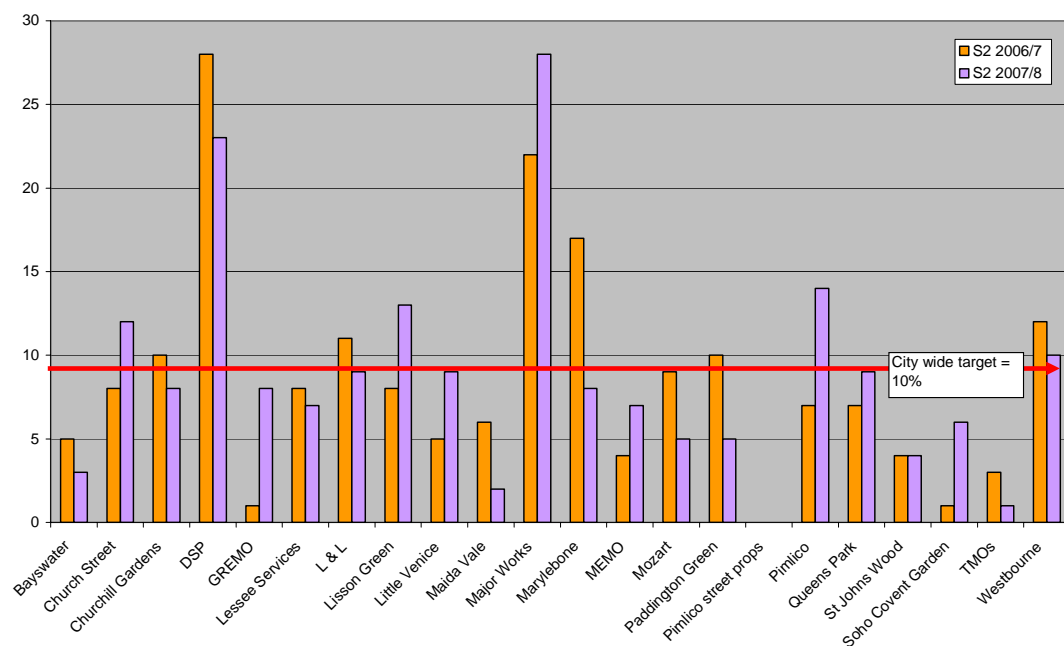
**Chart 10:** Comparison of the number of recommendations made at each stage of the complaints process



5.7 In order to encourage recommendations to be made at Stage 1, in 2007/08 a target was set; 90% of upheld Stage 1 complaints should have a recommendation, this target was linked to the provider incentive scheme. The target was not met by all teams and the overall performance has also dropped from the previous year by 24%. Only 2 teams at Stage 1 met the target; GREMO and Churchill Gardens.

## 5.8 Escalation Rate

**Chart 11:** Presents the escalation rate of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2 by service areas



5.9 Although the City wide target was 10%, in 2007/8 an escalation target was also set individually for each Estate Team based on the total number of properties that they manage and the target for Lessee Services and the Major Works team was based on their performance in 2006/07. The following teams did not meet the targets set: Church Street, DSP, GREMO, L&L, Lisson Green, Little Venice, Marylebone, Major works, MEMO, Queens Park, Pimlico, Soho Covent Garden and Westbourne.

5.10 The percentage of Stage 2 complaints escalating to Stage 3 is similar to the 2006/07 however the actual number of Stage 3 complaints has dropped by 14%. A joint review of all CWH Stage 3 complaints was carried out by CWH and WCC looking at the reasons why Stage 2 escalate to Stage 3 and the findings will be used to reduce the escalation in 2008/09.

### **5.11 Key Service Improvements**

A recommendations report, which details all the key recommendations made at all stages of the complaints process and by the LGO has been circulated to all Service Managers. The report provides a complete list of all key recommendations made and highlights key examples of best practice, which all service areas should take note of and if required should action.

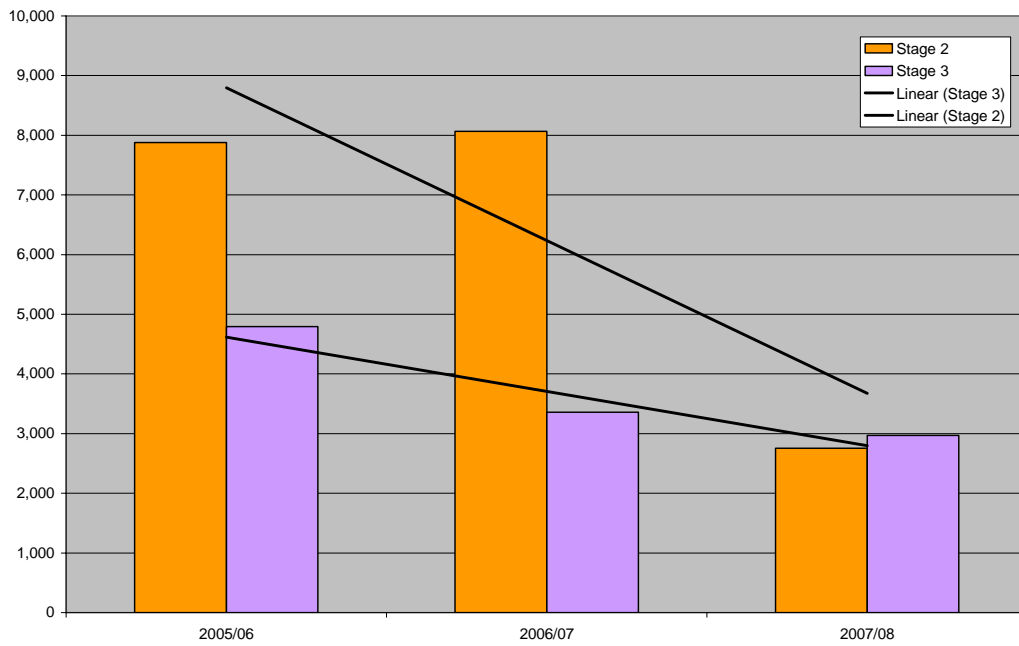
The following key service improvements were made in 2007/08:

- Where there is a problem with arson, bins are now located at least six metres away from the fabric of a building to prevent damage to the building in case of a fire;
- Leaseholders carrying out alterations have been reminded to ensure that communal areas are kept clear from obstruction at all times;
- The monitoring of calls handling at the repairs call centre has increased to ensure that staff comply with CWH Service Standards;
- The Housing Benefit Liaison Officer is contacted as soon as a problem with a resident's Housing Benefit claim is identified;
- When a new tenant is signed up to a leaseback property, the Estate Office now writes to the owner of the property to advise of any required repairs;
- The Housing Management Team and the Housing Options Services Team jointly now consider all Stage 2 responses regarding succession.

### **5.12 Compensation**

A total of **£8,484** compensation was awarded at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the complaints process, this is £2, 9411 less than in 2006/07.

**Chart 12:** A comparison of the amounts awarded at both stages



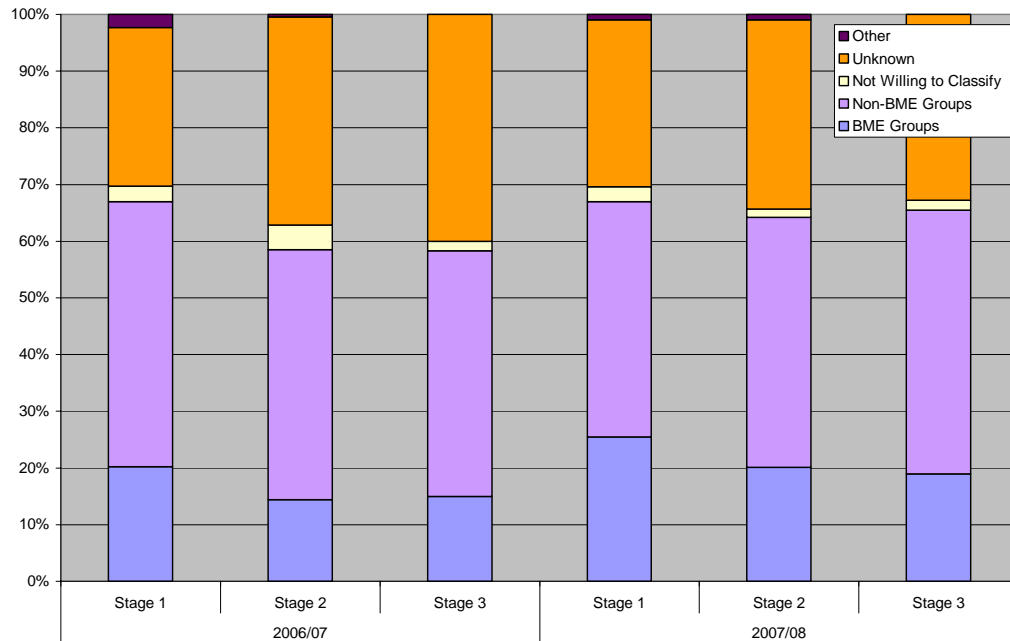
5.13 In 13 LGO cases Local Settlements<sup>2</sup> were decided. The settlements included compensation totalling **£2,975** this is compared to £12,116 awarded in 2006/07.

5.14 When it has been identified and not disputed that the liability lies with either the Provider or contractor the cost is recovered. In 2007/08 £6,626 was recovered.

<sup>2</sup> LGO Website - complaint settled during the course of the investigation

### 5.15 Ethnicity Monitoring

Chart 13: Presents the escalation of complaints by ethnicity

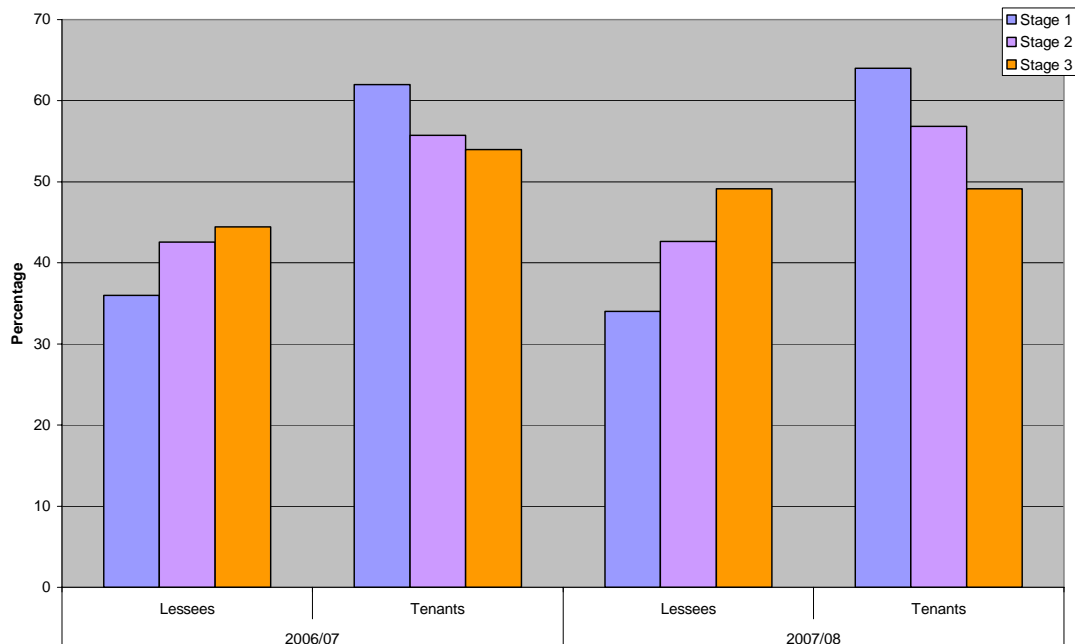


5.16 The BME groups are proportionately represented indicating that the complaints process, at all stages, is accessible for customers from different backgrounds.

5.17 The categories recorded are the ones used in the 2001 Census, with the addition of a couple of categories which have been agreed with WCC. Some residents consider that they do not fit into any of the categories or fit into more than one and therefore tick either unknown or other. Reporting on service areas on this way is required by WCC monitoring standards.

## 5.18 Type of Occupancy

**Chart 14:** Presents the type of occupancy of customers making Stage 1 complaints



5.19 Although the percentage of lessees escalating their complaint to Stage 3 has increased the actual number has remained the same as the previous year. The number of tenants escalating their complaint to Stage 3 has dropped by 18%.

## 6. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Escalation Rate

The escalation target from Stage 1 to Stage 2 has not been achieved. In order to improve the quality of the investigation at Stage 1 and the standard of the investigation, which should in turn reduce the escalation rate, the complaints team are now running lunch time workshops on complaints investigation techniques and management.

6.2 The escalation target for 2008/09 from Stage 2 to Stage 3 has been set at 49 Stage 3 complaints. A joint review of all CWH Stage 3 complaints was carried out by CWH and WCC looking at the reasons for the escalation and the findings will be used to meet this target.

### 6.3 Response Times

The following teams failed to meet the Stage 1 response target of 95%; CWH Repairs team; Haywards; Memo and the Major Works team. This matter has been highlighted to Service Managers and Relationship Managers and the performance of these teams will be monitored closely in 2008/09.

6.4 At Stage 2 although the escalation target has been met, only 25% of all Stage 2 complaints have been responded to in target. WCC have set all departments a target of 50% for all Stage 2 teams, this is a challenging target to meet and the complaints team are looking at ways to meet this target.

#### **6.5 Recommendations**

At Stage 1, only 2 teams met the target set in 2007/08. The target for 2008/09 has remained the same and the complaints team are monitoring the performance against this target and will inform Service Managers and Relationship Managers of teams that fail to meet this target.