

Complaints & Compliments 2023/2024 - Quarter 4

This report reviews complaint and compliment data for Quarter 4 (Q4) (January 2024 – March 2024).

1. Executive Summary

Complaint recording has remained high in Q4, peaking slightly with 45 registered formal complaints. At year end, Ocean Housing has recorded the highest number of formal complaints in the last 5 years.

Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) complaints continue to be the largest complaint category, albeit less than were recorded in Q3.

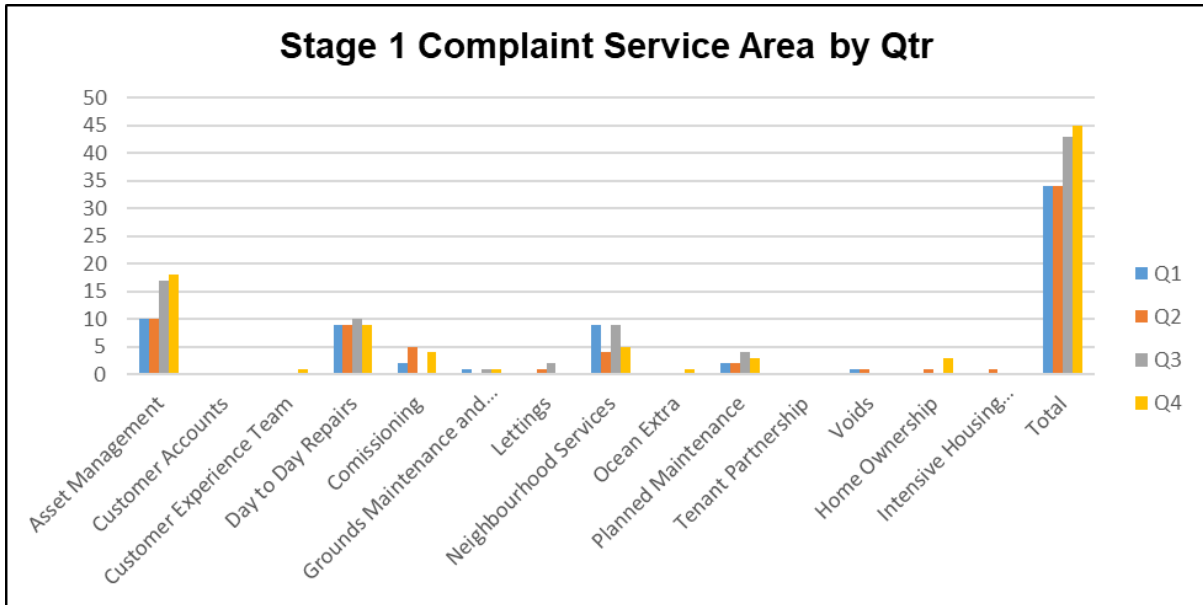
Upheld complaints have remained more than 50% of our complaint outcomes, suggesting the increased volume relates to legitimate service failures. Likewise, compensation remains high.

We have already put in place a range of measures including strengthening our weekly complex case reviews, increasing tracking and timely completion of promised actions and improved complaint learning monitoring. The new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, which came into effect from 1 April 2024, has led to changes in our policy and processes, together with the actions identified in the internal audit. This has been presented separately to Board for approval.

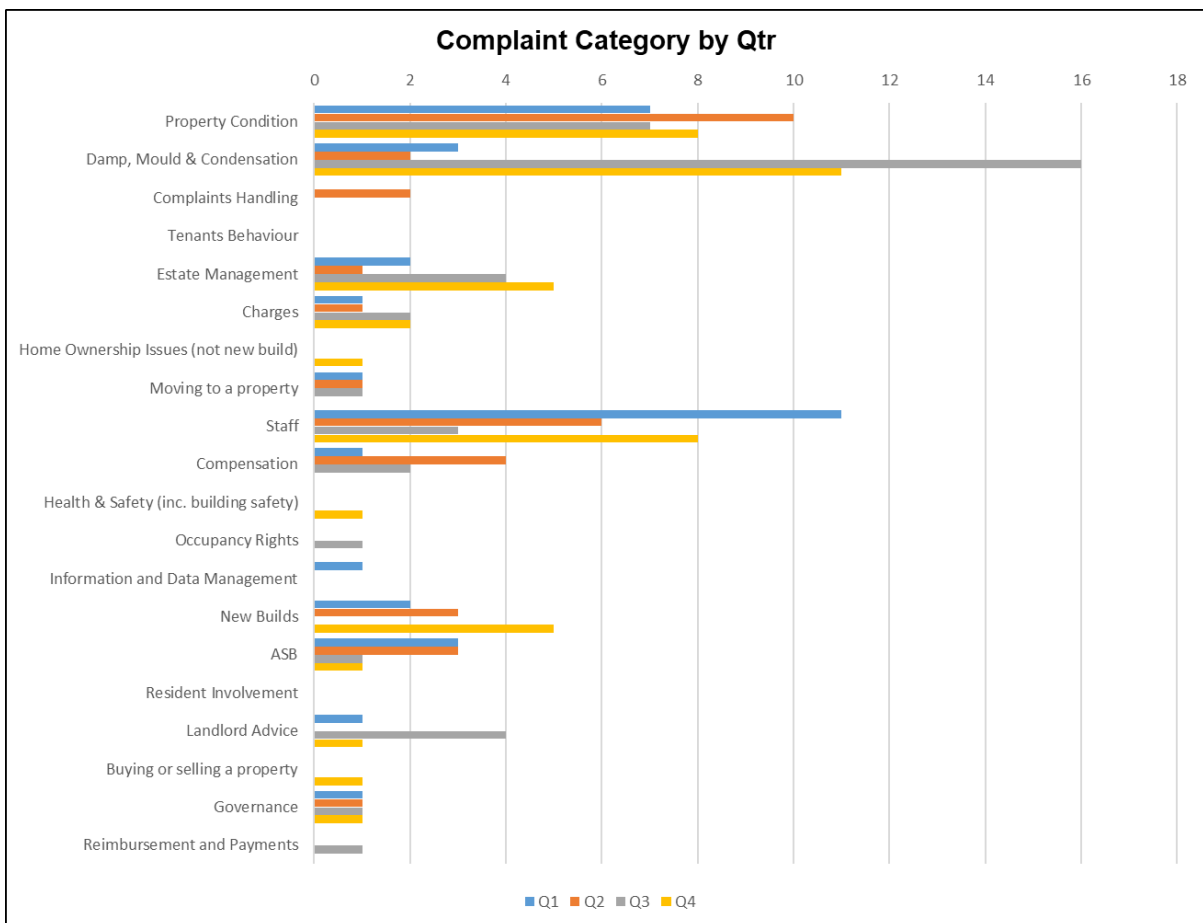
Board can be assured that we continue to review and implement actions to ensure full compliance by the target dates.

2. Stage 1 Complaints

- 45 complaints were received in Q4, which is 1 more than Quarter 3 and is an increase on the same quarter in the previous year.
- At year end there were a total of 156 complaints recorded, compared to 115 last year – a 35% increase.



The above chart shows complaints by service area. Breakdown by category is contained below.



Complaints by category

DMC complaints continue to be the largest category of complaint, though this has reduced from 16 in Q3 to 11 in Q4.

A high-level summary of the types of complaints recorded under these categories in Q4 is contained below:

Damp, Mould and Condensation

- Length of time to bring DMC issues and repairs to a conclusion.
- Survey repairs not being raised or have required tenants to chase.

Property Condition

- Length of time to fix heating.
- Successive trade staff visits to property without necessary repair being completed.

Staff

- Conduct of our contracted DMC Surveyor.

Estate Management

- Condition of communal car park

3. Complaint Outcome

The table below shows complaint outcome by quarter for 2023/24 and 2022/23 for comparison.

2022/ 2023	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Escalated Stage 2	Total
Q1	43%	24%	33%	0%	0%	29%	21
Q2	22%	34%	31%	13%	0%	19%	32
Q3	23%	36%	23%	18%	0%	14%	22
Q4	43%	25%	10%	23%	0%	28%	40
2023/ 2024	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Escalated Stage 2	Total
Q1	35%	26%	18%	21%	0%	29%	34
Q2	50%	24%	15%	12%	0%	32%	34
Q3	56%	19%	9%	16%	0%	30%	43
Q4	56%	16%	16%	11%	0%	18%	45

- Housing Ombudsman determinations have changed how we assess whether a complaint is upheld or not with greater acknowledgment of vulnerability and cumulative impact.

- Not upheld complaints have been about dissatisfaction with our process, reasonable business decisions, such as contracting out works, or requests to undertake duties outside our remit.
- Stage 2 escalations almost halved in Q4 compared to the previous three quarters.

4. Timeliness of complaint response

- One complaint was answered outside of timeframe this quarter, which given the volume of complaints was good performance. The delayed reply was due to visits and inspections being required to offer a substantial reply and was communicated ahead of time to the tenant, who accepted the extension.

Timeliness of complaint	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	YTD as %
Within service standard	30	32	36	44	142	91%
Outside service standard	4	2	7	1	14	9%
Ongoing	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	34	34	43	45	155	

5. Complaint Investigation forms

Complaint investigation forms are completed by the manager responding to the complaint once the response has been sent.

Investigation Forms Returned	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Stage 1 Complaints Received	34	34	43	45	156
Review Forms Returned	27	30	36	41	134
Complaint Withdrawn	7	4	7	4	18
Form Outstanding	0	0	0	0	0
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

6. Complaint Investigation Form Actions

The table below contains some of the key findings and actions identified from returned complaint investigation forms this quarter.

Key Findings	Actions Taken	Learning
--------------	---------------	----------

Some remedial repairs from DMC surveys have not been raised in a timely manner, and there had been a report about the behaviour of a contracted surveyor.	The contractor was made aware of the feedback and reminded of the standard expected. DMC surveys are now being undertaken by Ocean staff, and not agency and third-party contractors.	Training of contracted staff to be strengthened to ensure that standards are set and understood prior to contract start.
Localised repairs completed to maintain the car park however tenants reported ongoing deterioration of the road surface.	As soon as the complaint was raised, action was taken to tender the works and appoint the repair. The car park was completed shortly after.	Supervisors have been reminded that follow on works should be raised at the time of inspection to reduce the overall timeframe of repair.
Complaint action tracking processes were being completed however timeliness and urgency of action was not consistent.	Complaint actions tracking has been built and moved within QL.	At weekly complaint tracking meetings staff are required to set target completion dates and be accountable. Complaints tracking has moved to our IT system, QL, to more effectively address this issue and ensure the whole process is in one place.

7. Compensation

In Q4, a total of £6230 was awarded in compensation. This increase is partially due to learning from our most recent Housing Ombudsman determinations which have noted that the cumulative impact of service failures must be considered and compensated.

The table below shows compensation amounts paid by stage and quarter in 2022/23 for comparison.

2022/2023	Stage 1	Stage 2	Housing Ombudsman	Total
Q1	£100	£575	£150	£825
Q2	£400	£600	£150	£1150
Q3	£550	£600	£0	£1150

Q4	£350	£1520	£0	£1870
2023/2024	Stage 1	Stage 2	Housing	Total
Q1	£850	£100	£0	£950
Q2	£202	£4250	£0	£4452
Q3	£5300	£5700	£2450	£13450
Q4	£5080	£1600	£1025	£7705

8. Stage 2 Complaints

Eight complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in Q4 as summarised below with the agreed outcome. The RAG rating is used to determine likelihood of escalation to the Housing Ombudsman. In all cases we have tried to mitigate the risk of escalation.

Complaint	Outcome	Assessment	Due Date / Sent Date	RAG
DMC present despite having surveys and work previously completed	Tenant remains dissatisfied with compensation offered.	Timeliness with DMC process caused delays to work being completed.	01/03/24 01/03/24	Red
Persistent damp in property caused damage to belongings and delay in addressing due to timeliness of raising repairs.	Offered compensation and to replace affected flooring.	Issues with process caused delays in completing a cavity wall inspection.	12/04/24 12/04/24	Yellow
Disabled Funded Grant adaptations to property have caused noise issues for neighbour	Possible works following joint visit between housing and property services to assess noise levels.	A complicated case requiring input from Cornwall Council, and their contractor.	18/04/24 18/04/24	Yellow

Questioning if appointment notifications were sent, and behaviour of surveyor	<i>Pending investigation</i>	<i>Pending investigation</i>	13/05/24	NA
Heating in the property has not been working	<i>Pending investigation</i>	<i>Pending investigation</i>	25/04/24	N/A
A contractor was used to complete a job instead of Ocean staff	Not upheld. Pending further DMC survey	It was reasonable for us to use contractor in this case. DMC survey arranged	15/04/24 15/04/24	
Allegation that cleaning staff used an undiluted cleaner	<i>Pending investigation</i>	<i>Pending investigation</i>	23/04/24	N/A
Length of time that another resident's mobility scooter was left on a communal path	<i>Pending investigation</i>	<i>Pending investigation</i>	09/05/24	NA

Two Stage 2 complaints were upheld, two were partially upheld, and four are currently pending response.

We are still dealing with some of the historic issues created by our initial DMC process which has since evolved and improved.

Housing Ombudsman Complaints

Summary position as at 31 March 2024

- One Decision Review following appeal received in Q4.
- 2 new Housing Ombudsman cases opened and requests for information in Q4.
- Of which 1 Housing Ombudsman determination received in Q4 and 1 live and yet to be determined

9. Complaint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Information (EDI)

We have split demographic data into individual quarters so we can monitor any complaint trends relative to EDI.

Gender	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Female	27	18	31	31	107
Male	7	16	12	14	49
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0
Age	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
18-30	5	6	5	5	21
31-50	13	14	20	16	63
51-80	15	13	18	21	67
80+	1	0	0	0	1
Unknown	0	1	0	3	4
Marital Status	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Civil Partnership	0	0	0	0	0
Cohabit	0	2	1	2	5
Divorced	0	1	1	0	2
Married	1	1	3	2	7
Partner	0	0	0	0	0
Separated	0	0	0	0	0
Single	2	9	2	4	17
Widow	0	0	2	0	2
No Answer	1	0	0	0	1
Unknown	30	21	34	37	122

The demographic of complainants remains roughly representative of our general tenant population when viewed over the year – below is the current tenant age and gender profile data for information.

Age

Description	Count	% of Total	% of Data Held
20 and Under	43	0.63%	0.71%
21 - 30	815	11.99%	13.53%

31 - 40	1291	18.99%	21.43%
41 - 50	1097	16.14%	18.21%
51 - 60	1191	17.52%	19.77%
61 - 70	893	13.14%	14.82%
71 - 80	520	7.65%	8.63%
80+	175	2.57%	2.90%

Gender

Description	Count	% of Total	% of Data Held
Female	4031	59.31%	60.19%
Male	2664	39.19%	39.78%
Other	2	0.03%	0.03%

We have seen an increase in complaints from the 51-80 age group, and this continues into Q4, despite it not being reflective of our overall demographic. The breakdown of male and female complainants remains consistent with our demographic population profile in Q4.

Possible reasons for the increase in complaints from our older demographic is further transparency around our complaints process, ensuring people who are dissatisfied with their experience are signposted to the process after all other avenues are exhausted. The majority of complainants in this age group complained about the DMC process.

Marital status, religion and sexuality are aspects where tenant data is still particularly low and therefore not statistically reliable at its current level. We are continuing to collect EDI data through Tenant Satisfaction Measures, periodic EDI days with the Customer Experience Team asking all callers to update information and further work scheduled as a priority Fit For the Future project.

For the first time we have marked whether a tenant is vulnerable or not against each complaint received in Q4. While collecting tenant vulnerability data is an ongoing Fit For Future project, and we hope to expand our database of information for this, for the purpose of categorising tenant vulnerability for this report we have classed a tenant as vulnerable if they have mentioned it during the course of their complaint, even if we do not have them formally categorised as such in our system.

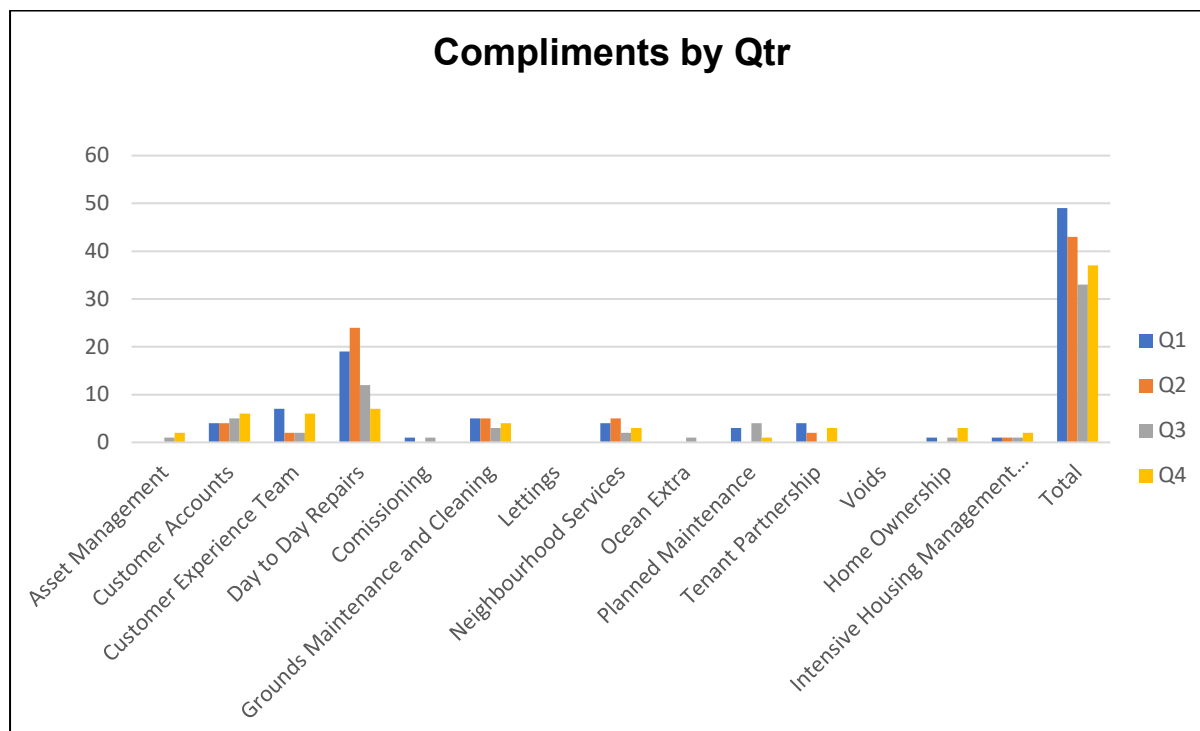
Whilst the number of our formal complaints does not represent enough data points to draw many significant conclusions from, we have developed a tool to use all our available tenant satisfaction data to produce several insights on tenant satisfaction based on location, property type, and demographics.

Vulnerable	Q4	YTD
Yes	11	11
No	34	34

Total	45	45
--------------	-----------	-----------

Compliments

There were 26 compliments received in Q4. Our compliment levels between individual teams remain consistent, with the customer-facing Property Services team receiving the most compliments from tenants.



Examples of compliments received:

Service Area	Compliment
Customer Experience	My dealings with the call centre when reporting repairs has always been to a high standard
Intensive Housing Management Service	Tenant said that whenever he sees or speaks with Tracy she brings a great joy with her and she brightens up his day. They really appreciate everything that she does and cannot thank her enough.
Tenant Partnership	I love receiving the Street Talk magazine, it's a good read and very informative. I always enter the competitions, so delighted to be a prize winner this time - thank you so much.
Asset Management	The flats themselves are spacious and when the front door closes, it is your home. The surveyor who came out to approve the works I undertook in replacing the kitchen was very helpful

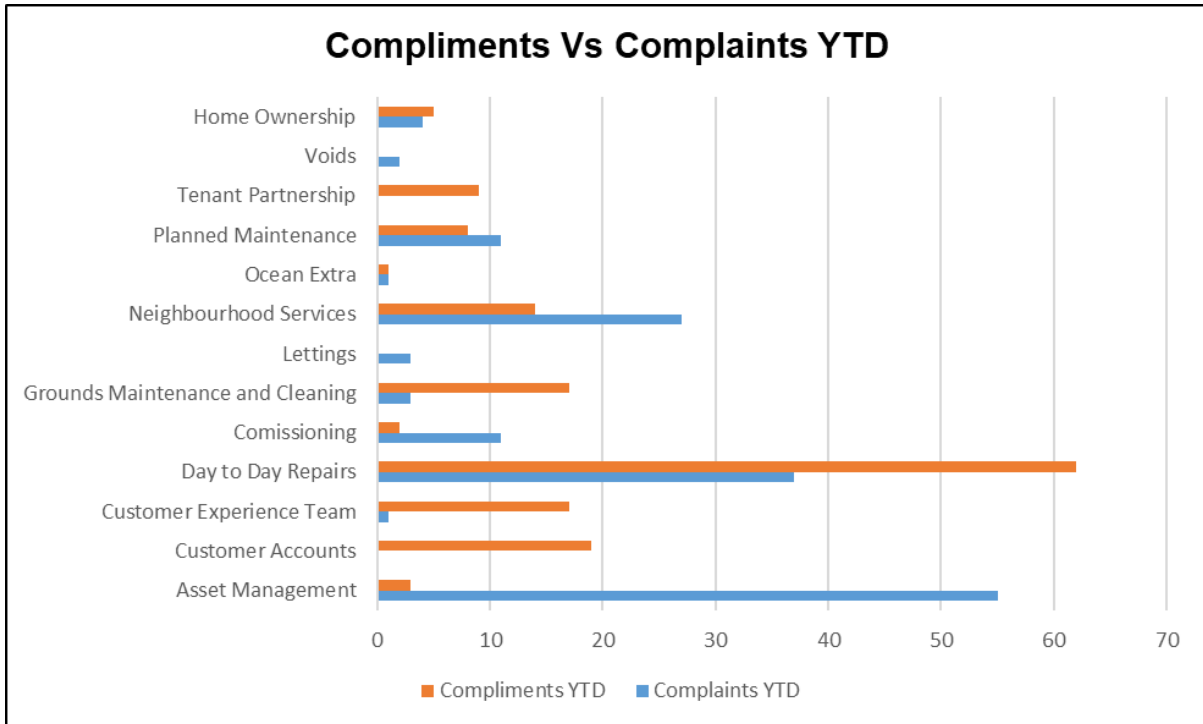
	and professional as was the lady from the Asset Management team over the phone.
Grounds Maintenance & Cleaning	Wow the jungle has disappeared. The gardeners have chopped dug and sawn. Worked like heroes. Please say huge thank you to the gardeners. It's a pleasure to look out and see a tidy patch. The birds are loving it.
Day to Day Repairs	Would like to thank property services especially Kelly for being so helpful regarding the water leak this morning. She was very helpful and got everything sorted for me quickly. The plumber who came was very helpful and polite during his visit as well.

10. Overall Feedback Comparison

Below is a table and graph showing data for both compliments and complaints for each area of the business year to date.

We end the year with more compliments received than complaints, however the proportion has reduced due to the increase in Q3 and Q4 this year.

Compliments Vs Complaints	Complaints YTD	Compliments YTD
Asset Management	55	3
Income Management Team	0	19
Customer Experience Team	1	17
Day to Day Repairs	37	62
Commissioning	11	2
Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning	3	17
Lettings	3	0
Neighbourhood Services	27	14
Ocean Extra	1	1
Planned Maintenance	11	8
Tenant Partnership	0	9
Voids	2	0
Home Ownership	4	5
Intensive Housing Management Service	1	5
Total	156	162



11. Designated Board Members with responsibility for Complaints - oversight and scrutiny

In line with agreed governance arrangements, the Head of Customer Experience, and the Complaints and GDPR Coordinator met with the Board members responsible for complaints (Members Responsible for Complaints) to review and scrutinise the contents of this report on Wednesday 24 April. The MRC noted the content and asked questions about individual cases and learning.

Verbal feedback was provided by Board Members at the Ocean Housing Board meeting on 15 May 2024. The report and contents were noted by the Board.

Following an internal audit in February 2024, one management action was to invite Board members to review current reporting and feedback to the Head of Customer Experience on any additional reporting requirements. Executive Group are to receive a monthly dashboard of complaints to monitor volumes, trends, compensation and learning. No additional reporting requirements are required by Board in addition to the quarterly report and annual report to be presented at August Board and published on the Ocean Housing website thereafter.