



# **Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement**

**2023/24**



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# FORWARD



**Helen Cope**

Board Member Responsible  
for Complaints

As the Member Responsible for Complaints at MTVH, I am pleased to be able to share this comprehensive Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the financial year 2023/24 with our residents, colleagues and key partners on behalf of the MTVH Board.

Ensuring that we are listening to our residents and that we are working together to provide the services and support that matters most is at the heart of our five-year strategy at MTVH. While it is disappointing to see complaints about our services increasing, this report sets out some reasons behind this. I am confident that our complaint process is accessible to those who need it and am assured that our operational teams are focused on putting things right for our residents and improving customer experience right across the organisation.

This report demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement and our commitment to working with our residents. A copy of the report has been shared with our Customer Services Committee for review and discussion. Our resident committee members have shared their views on the report and through regular quarterly complaint reporting continue to support the MTVH leadership team to identify areas for focus and improvement.

As a Board we are particularly encouraged by the following:

- **Focus on learnings:** The new approaches to learning from complaints, including risk meetings and the Insight and Learning Action Group, demonstrate a proactive approach to improvement.
- **Service improvements:** The introduction of the CRM system to improve the complaint experience for residents and the keeping of relevant records to improve our understanding of resident experience.
- **Compliance:** The annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code confirms MTVH's compliance with the recently updated Code, demonstrating our commitment to best practice and engagement with the Service.

The Board recognise the need to provide a responsive and effective complaint handling service to residents and fully support the new complaints team structure for the coming financial year. The focus on resolving complaints as early as possible to improve the experience of our residents and to put things right promptly is welcomed and the progress of this new approach will be monitored through the Customer Service Committee.

As the Member Responsible for Complaints, I am confident that MTVH will continue to work together with our residents to improve our services, learning from each complaint and improving services to meet the expectations of the Housing Ombudsman, and most importantly, our residents.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report outlines the annual complaint performance for financial year 2023/24 and the key learnings and service improvements made following resolution of complaints. The report is a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (section 8.1).

### Complaint performance - 2023/24

Total complaints received	6,900
◦ Stage 1 complaints	5,533
◦ Stage 2 complaints	1,367
% increase in complaints received compared with last year	30%
% of complaints progressed to stage 2	24.7%
% of complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales	85.8%

### Housing Ombudsman determinations - 2023/24

Number of cases determined	138
% increase in cases determined compared with last year	31%
Number of cases determined as severe maladministration	8
Number of findings received (note, there can be multiple findings per case)	347
Number of complaint handling failure orders received	6

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This year saw the introduction of a range of new approaches to learning from our complaints. While we are disappointed to see complaints increasing by 30% this year, we remain committed continuously improving the services we provide to our residents, learning not just from complaints but from listening to our residents across all service points and from the insight provided by the Housing Ombudsman Service, the media and other housing providers.

It is important to us that our complaint process is accessible to our residents and work has taken place this year to ensure that residents are aware of the complaint process and feel comfortable to contact us about concerns. Awareness has been supported by national and social media campaigns, including the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities “make it right” campaign.

Housing Ombudsman case determinations increased in line with complaints this year. The Service have implemented a revised approach to their determinations which has helped to highlight the complexity of cases being determined and better identify areas for learning and improvement. There were eight cases where severe maladministration was found. In each case a full review was completed to ensure that we are doing all that we can to improve our services and take action where it is needed.

Staffing changes have been made in the complaints team to ensure that we can provide the right support to residents during the complaints process. Two new management roles have been introduced within the team to lead improved resolution of complaints at stage 1 and to ensure trends and learnings are more swiftly identified and acted upon across the organisation.

This year is the first year where complaint performance measures will be reported to the Regulator of Social Housing under the Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard. The measures focus on the number of complaints responded to per 1,000 properties within specified customer groups and the percentage of these responded to within HOS Complaint Handling Code timescales. The measures do not cover all customer groups (for example leaseholders) but provide an indicator of overall performance. MTVH welcome this improved approach to reporting and the benefits this will bring to helping us and our residents to understand our performance in line with others in the Housing sector.

As part of our commitment to maintaining a positive complaint handling culture within the organisation, learnings and service improvements have been identified from complaints and HOS cases. These learnings have influenced changes in service delivery and policy in the past year and will continue to do so in the coming year.

In line with the HOS Complaint Handling Code, a self-assessment against the requirements of the revised Code, which came into effect on 1st April this year, has been completed. The self-assessment has determined that our complaint policy and processes are fully compliant with the Code requirements.

## BACKGROUND

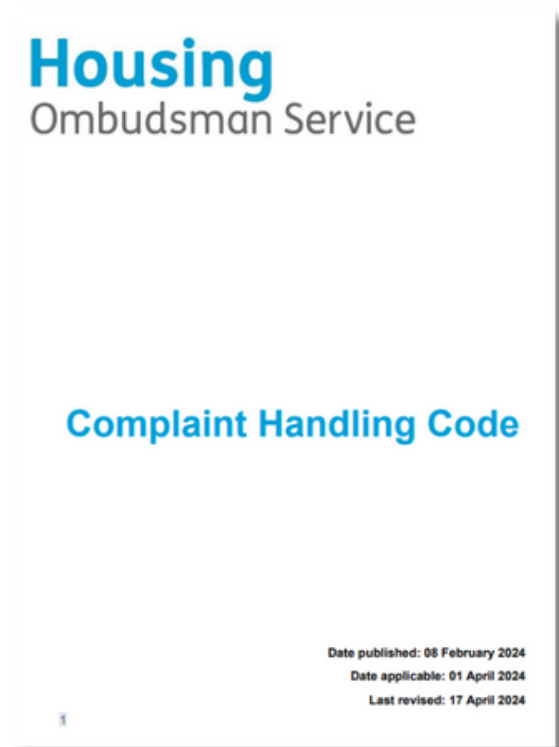


On 9th February 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service published their new Complaint Handling Code. As a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, MTVH must comply with the Code.

Section 8 and 9 of the Code outline the reporting, scrutiny and oversight requirements for scheme members to ensure compliance with the Code. Landlords are required to complete an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, to share this report with their Board, and to publish the report with a response from the Board on their website by no later than 30th June each year.

In November 2023, Salesforce CRM became the primary system used to record, monitor and respond to complaints across MTVH. This system replaced the NEC system and provides an improved range of reporting as well as greater record management capabilities in relation to complaints.

Following a restructure within the Customer Services directorate, responsibility for Complaints team moved from the Head of Customer Services to the Head of Customer Voice. This change in responsibility was completed to provide greater opportunities for learnings to be identified from complaints and shared as part of customer influence and engagement activities under the Customer Voice Framework. From January 2024, the Complaints and Customer Voice teams have become part of the new Customer Experience directorate.



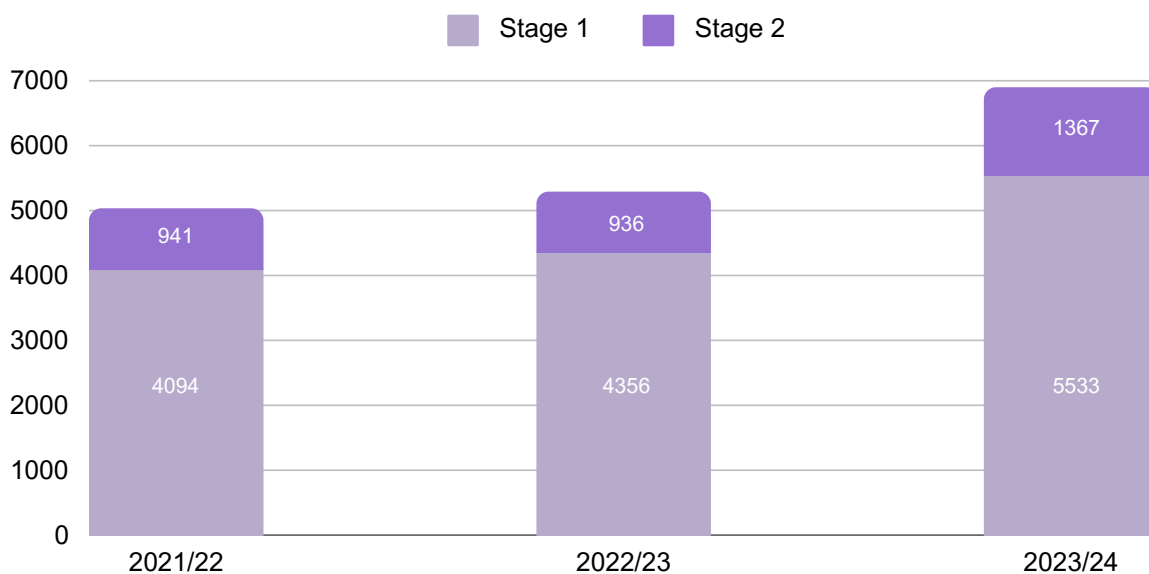
## COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE



Overall, there was an increase in total complaints of 30% compared with the previous financial year. This figure is broken down as follows across our complaint stages:

Stage 1: 5,533  
Stage 2: 1,367

We had an escalation rate of 24.7% from stage 1 to stage 2 during the year.



The increase in complaint volumes has been taken very seriously by operational teams who are committed to identifying areas for improvement across our services.

In line with previous years, the top 3 reasons for complaints related to repairs, property compliance, and housing services issues.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code is clear that high volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process (section 3.3). To comply with the Code, our complaint process has been made accessible on our website, through MTVH Online and is publicised on posters and in tenant welcome packs. While we are satisfied that our complaint process is accessible and well publicised to residents, our overall aim is to ensure that resident concerns are resolved promptly and effectively, without the need to complain and all teams across MTVH will be working towards this in the coming year.

Informal benchmarking with other housing providers has shown that most providers saw increases in complaints from residents. Throughout the year we have seen increased support for residents from national and social media and we have supported the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities as they continued their “make it right” national media campaign. To make sure that our residents were able to contact us and have their complaint appropriately investigated, resourcing levels in the complaints team were adjusted during May 2023.

## COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE



Complaints and service requests made directly to Board and Executive team members increased during the year. Where such contacts are received, a process is in place to ensure that customers receive an appropriate response, in line with standard complaint and service procedures. A revised approach to these contacts is being developed using the new CRM system to improve visibility of outcomes to relevant members.

As part of our Complaints Policy, requests for complaints relating to the following issues were not usually progressed:

- Where the cause of the complaint occurred more than 6 months ago
- When court proceedings had already been confirmed
- Where a complaint had already been fully handled under our Complaints Policy
- Complaints relating to insurance claims
- Reports of anti-social behaviour (these are handled under our ASB Policy)
- Complaints about rent increases or service charges or their reasonableness (these are handled under our rent and service charge dispute process)
- Complaints relating to planned Section 20 works (these are handled under our section 20 process)

This year sees the first submission of information to the Regulator of Social Housing under the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) standard. MTVH welcome this improved approach to reporting and the benefits this will bring to helping us and our residents to understand our performance in line with others in the sector.

As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard, complaints received per 1,000 properties for residents of low cost rental accommodation (LCRA) and residents of low cost home ownership (LCHO) will be reported. The percentage of complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales for each of these groups will also be reported. It is important to note that the TSMs do not include all complaints handled by MTVH during the past year as not all customers are covered by the standard.

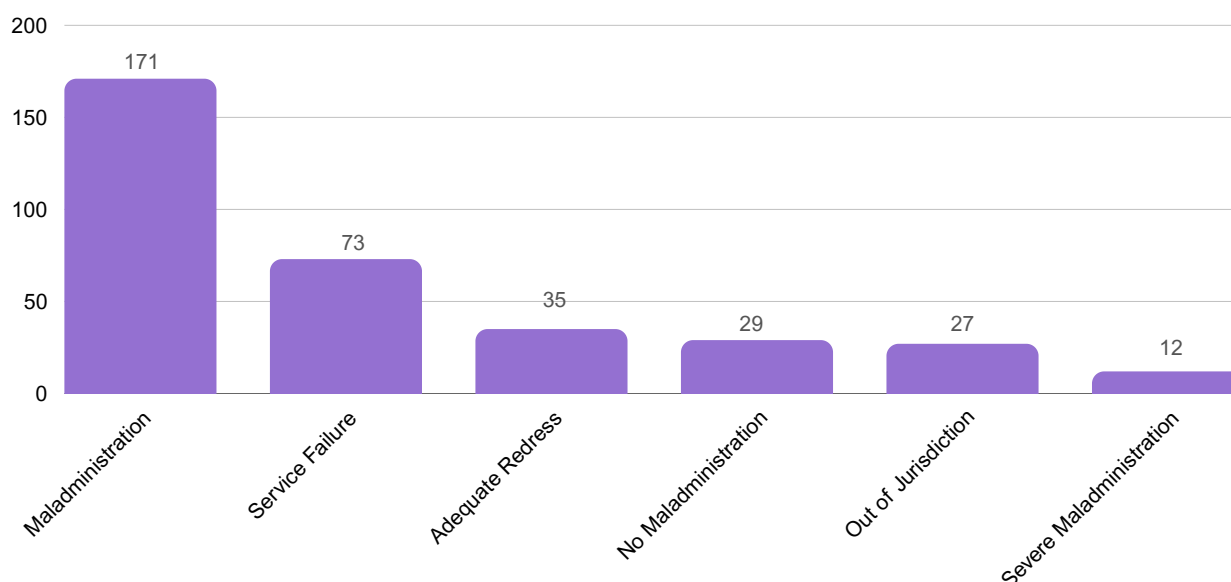


## HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS



The Housing Ombudsman Service determined 138 cases for MTVH in the last year. This is an increase of 31% compared with last year when 105 cases were determined. Eight of these determinations resulted in a finding of severe maladministration. One of these cases was initially determined in the previous financial year but appealed with the severe maladministration finding upheld during this year.

The Housing Ombudsman Service have amended their approach to issuing orders and findings when determining cases this year. A total of 347 findings were made in relation to cases and the table in appendix 1 provides a breakdown of these. This revised approach has been implemented to recognise the complexity of complaints reviewed by the Service, acknowledging that often there are multiple issues within a complaint, some of which may be handled better than others.



For each finding from the HOS, there may be between 1-5 orders which must be complied with by MTVH. This year we introduced a “risk meeting” approach to ensure compliance with Housing Ombudsman Service orders within the appropriate timescales. These meetings require relevant senior colleagues to review orders for their areas of responsibility and take accountability for completing the required orders. Overall, the risk meeting approach works very well and ensures that learnings and service improvements are made as a result of each case.

Unfortunately, there are times when compliance with orders within the required timescale has not been delivered. We received 6 Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs) from the Service last year. As with all findings from the Ombudsman, we work collaboratively with the Service to make sure we improve our processes to meet the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code and deliver the best possible service to our residents. Difficulties in using the Housing Ombudsman Service online portal was the primary reason for these orders being received and the Service has now met with the Specialist Complaint Lead to resolve these difficulties.

## SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNINGS



### Sources of Learning



Housing Ombudsman Learning  
Reports  
Independent Review Reporting



Complaint, Survey  
and Customer Voice  
Activity Data



Insight and Learning Action Group  
Regular Meetings with the Housing  
Ombudsman Service

This year the Housing Ombudsman Service published two Spotlight reports sharing best practice with housing providers on thematic issues. The reports related to Knowledge and Information Management and Attitudes, Respect and Rights. We have reviewed these report in detail and identified several learnings which are being taken forward by teams across MTVH.

A new approach to learning from Housing Ombudsman complaints was implemented during the financial year with a risk meeting taking place with the relevant heads of service and management colleagues following each case determination. The approach also focuses on ensuring compliance with Ombudsman orders.

A further learning approach for cases where severe maladministration has been determined was also implemented this year – the Insight and Learning Action Group (ILAG) with director representatives from across the organisation. The ILAG meet quarterly to review customer feedback through surveys, complaints and customer voice activities. The Group also meet as required when a finding of severe maladministration is received from the Housing Ombudsman Service. The aim of the group is to review key sources of customer feedback, to identify learnings and to monitor the actions taken across the organisation as a result.

An independent review of a selection of our Housing Ombudsman cases was commissioned in quarter four this year to identify learnings and remedial actions from these cases. This review will conclude at the start of the new financial year however some learnings have already been shared with the Complaint team for action.

Strengthening our relationship with the Housing Ombudsman Service continues to be a core focus and significant progress was made throughout the year. A primary point of contact at the Service has been provided and regular meetings now take place to review any issues impacting compliance with the Service and to discuss learnings from recent cases.

## SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNINGS

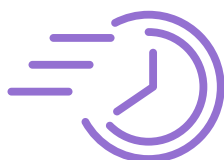


During the year four core areas for service improvement were identified through complaint trend reporting and the methods mentioned above. These learnings and a summary of the actions taken are as follows:



### Support for vulnerable customers during the complaint process

Refresher training has been provided to all complaint handlers on how to identify and support residents who may require additional support during their complaint. The team received further training on how to refer residents to the Assessment and Support team and refresher safeguarding training. With the introduction of CRM during the year, resident needs are more easily visible to colleagues who need to view this information.



### The need for timely action following complaints

The Complaint Handling Code is clear that complaints must be closed once a date for resolution can be provided to the complainant. In cases relating to repairs, this often means closing complaints when appointment dates for repairs are confirmed. If, however an appointment date needs to change, this can result in resolutions not being made as agreed. The newly formed Property Experience team now monitor complaint resolution action plans to make sure that agreed repairs take place as agreed or if this is not possible, they make sure to keep the customer updated.



### Record keeping across the organisation

The introduction of Salesforce CRM during the year has helped to keep track of complaints from start to finish and dramatically improved our record keeping. CRM training for colleagues focused on the importance of maintaining records.



### Compensation values offered during the complaint process

An engagement exercise was completed by the Customer Voice team to establish what customers believe to be reasonable compensation in relation to complaints. A review of Housing Ombudsman Service Remedies Guidance and determinations has also taken place. The learnings from these activities will be used to revise our existing compensation policy in the coming year. In the interim, revised guidance about when the offer compensation to residents has been provided to complaint handlers.

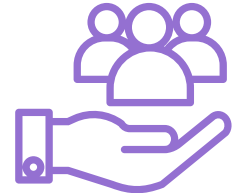
## SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNINGS



In the coming year, further action will be taken across these four core themes as follows:

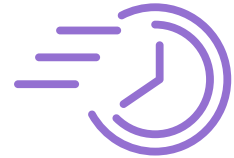
### Support for vulnerable customers during the complaint process

A review of the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy will be completed. The aim of the review will be to completely update the policy and to introduce a more supportive, informed and person-centred approach, focusing on how we can work together with our residents, finding better ways to communicate and rebuild trust with residents through reasonable service adjustments and support.



### The need for timely action following complaints

A new Customer Resolution team will be trialed for the first 6 months of the year to focus on resolving less complex complaints as promptly as possible. This team will focus on developing resolution focused processes to support our existing complaints approach. Should the trial be successful and improve resident experience, we will extend this approach.



### Record keeping across the organisation

Further work will continue on this learning action in the coming year following the launch of a single housing management system at the start of April. The single housing management system means that all customer housing records will be held in a central location making it easier to access, update and review information



### Compensation values offered during the complaint process

An updated Compensation Policy will be completed during the year using the learnings from activities already completed and in line with HOS Remedies Guidance and reporting. It is hoped that an updated approach to compensation will help us to put things right for residents more quickly, reducing the need for escalation of complaints from stage 1 to stage 2 as well as reducing adverse findings following HOS case determinations.



### Annual Self-Assessment

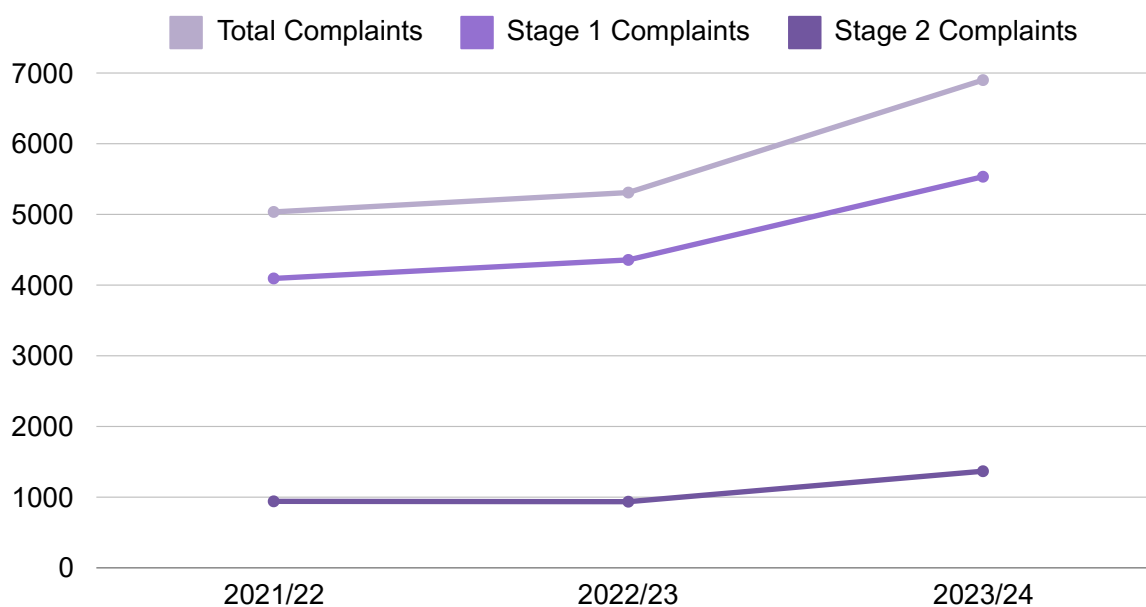
The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code requires all scheme members to self-assess their complaint policy and processes against the requirements of the Code. The self-assessment must be reviewed and approved by the Board at least annually. Once approved, the self-assessment is published on our website along with this annual complaint performance and service improvement report.

This year's self-assessment can be viewed on our website and outlines our full compliance with the revised Code which came into effect from 1st April. To ensure compliance, the Complaints Policy was updated in March 2024 and approved by the Customer Services Committee. The Complaint Policy can also be found on our website.

## APPENDIX 1 - ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE INFORMATION



Total complaints per financial year:



Housing Ombudsman Service findings by category and relevant directorate:

HOS Finding Category	Sales and Development	Customer Services	Property	Other	Total findings
Maladministration	6	103	61	1	171
Out of Jurisdiction	2	17	7	1	27
Adequate Redress	1	21	13	0	35
No Maladministration	0	15	14	0	29
Severe Maladministration	0	4	8	0	12
Service Failure	1	53	18	1	73
<b>Total Findings</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>347</b>

Note: HOS stands for Housing Ombudsman Service

## APPENDIX 1 - ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

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### Additional information:

To view the MTVH Complaints Policy visit:

<https://www.mtvh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Complaints-Policy-April-2024.pdf>

To view the MTVH Complaints Policy visit:

<https://www.mtvh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Complaints-Policy-April-2024.pdf>

To view the Housing Ombudsman Service Landlord Performance Report for MTVH for financial year 2022/23 visit:

<https://www.mtvh.co.uk/contact-us/report-a-problem/make-a-complaint-about-mtvh/complaints-performance/>

To view additional information published by the Housing Ombudsman regarding MTVH during the financial year 2023/24 visit:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/11/14/metropolitan-thames-valley-to-pay-3650/>

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/04/20/poor-fire-safety-complaint-handling-by-metropolitan-thames-valley-results-in-severe-maladministration-finding/>

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2024/03/21/complaint-handling-learning-in-latest-report/>

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/11/21/record-levels-of-complaint-handling-failure-orders-issued/>



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