Customer Complaint Handling workshop

- Presenter: Nigel Greenwood

An introduction to the workshop

This workshop covers:

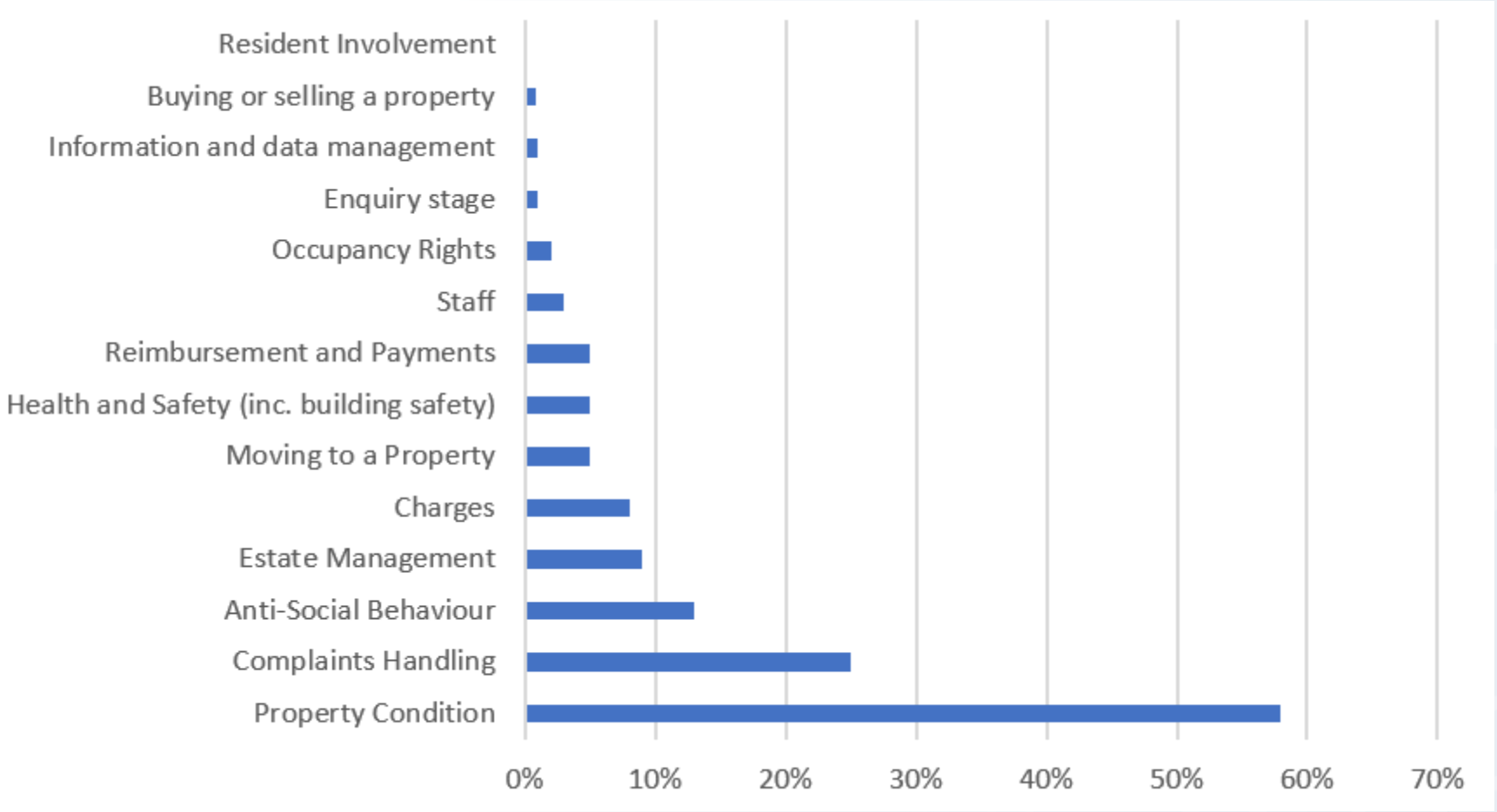
- Why customers complain
- How to minimise complaints
- The 3 things a complainant wants
- Handling the initial call
- Investigating the complaint
- Communicating with the complainant
- Getting resolution
- Learning from complaints

It doesn't cover dealing with the Ombudsman (we have other courses for that!) and it is designed to be interactive so don't hide behind your screen!

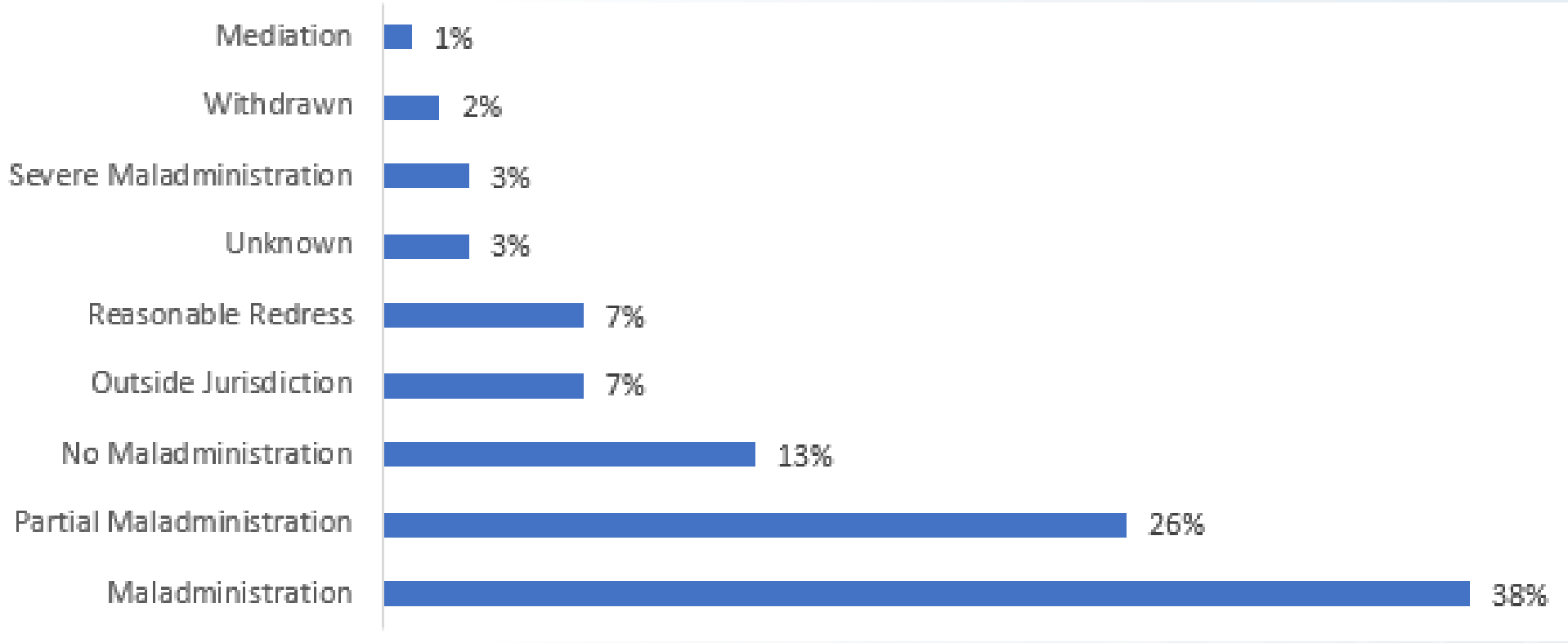
Why customers complain - generic

1. Poor customer service – 70% of complaints!
2. Unexpected costs
3. Low quality goods or product
4. Poor user experience (think websites and phone menus!)
5. Poor communication

Why customers complain - tenants



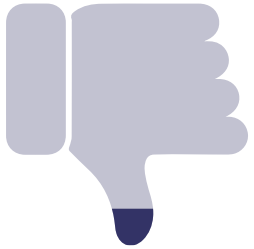
66% of complaints referred to the Ombudsman had not been handled properly!



A November 2023 survey found that only 34% of social tenants are satisfied with their landlord's complaint-handling.

WARNING! Not everyone who is unhappy will complain!

15%



social renters who considered but did not complain

26%



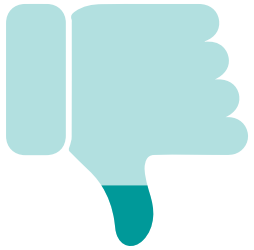
living in non-decent homes

35%



living in a home with a Category 1 Hazard

25%



private renters who considered but did not complain

30%



living in non-decent homes

39%



living in a home with a Category 1 Hazard

30%



living in a home with damp

hqn TRAINING

How to minimise complaints

1. Focus on the customer experience
2. Map your customer journeys
3. Fix the issues on the journeys
4. Use complaint data and customer feedback to continually improve
5. Communicate with your customers – be honest, tell them you are on an improvement journey and ask for their feedback.

The 3 things a complainant wants

1. They want you to listen to them
2. **They want you to show empathy**
3. They want resolution

Showing empathy

There are 3 types of empathy:

1. **Affective empathy** - the ability to understand another person's emotions and respond appropriately.
2. **Somatic empathy** - having a physical reaction in response to what someone else is experiencing.
3. **Cognitive empathy** - being able to understand another person's mental state and what they might be thinking in response to the situation.

Why showing empathy is important

Showing empathy increases co-operation and forgiveness, strengthens relationships and decreases aggression and judgment.

In simple terms, showing empathy to customers makes calls easier to handle, reduces complaints and makes both you and the customer feel better.

It's a key part of delivering a great customer experience!

How to show empathy

1. Practice Active Listening
2. Listen for emotion. Try to notice the signals people are giving that can indicate what they are feeling.
3. Share their feelings – make yourself vulnerable (it's not just another call!)
4. Take action and offer help - the advantage of knowing what another person is going through is that you can better identify what they need.

Active Listening

1. Ask open questions (who, how, why, what, when)
2. Don’t interrupt!
3. Focus on listening – don’t judge or jump to conclusions
4. Don’t start planning what to say next – don’t get distracted in any way.
5. Show you’re listening – by saying yes, go on or “uh huh” occasionally.
6. Ask questions to clarify if necessary (and take notes).
7. Summarise and ask for confirmation “have I got that right?”
8. Think about your body language if you’re face to face.

hqn TRAINING

The 6 things that all customers want

1. Make it easy:

- As few steps as possible
- Make it obvious
- Do as much of the work as possible for them
- “hold their hand” – provide information and support where they need it

2. Set their expectations

- Make it clear what will happen, when it will happen and how it will happen
- Don’t oversell your product or service
- Be consistent – especially for after sales vs sales
- Make clear promises that you know you can keep

3. Keep your promises

- Explicit and implicit promises
- Have a key promise “if we let you down, we will fix it”
- Have clear service standards through your business
- Have internal and external service level agreements

The 6 things that all customers want ...(cont'd)

4. Keep them informed

- Update them on progress
- Engage with them on social media
- Send information relevant to them – understand their needs
- Use their language

5. Treat them as an individual

- Use their name
- Remember what they have bought
- Listen and find out their needs
- "What we can do for you is..." not "our process is..."

6. Put it right if it goes wrong

- Empathise – apologise that they have had to complain
- Use active listening to ensure you understand the impact on them
- Don't ask them to do any work
- Put them in the position they would have been in if it hadn't gone wrong

Let’s have a break!



Other chocolate bars are available!


WELCOME
BACK

What's coming next

- Handling the initial call
- Investigating the complaint
- Communicating with the complainant
- Getting resolution
- Learning from complaints

Handling the initial call

1. Set the tone – “Hi, you’re through to XXX, can I take your name please”
2. “Thank you, how can I help you today”
3. Listen, take notes, don’t get distracted and DON’T INTERRUPT!
4. Ask questions to clarify if needed when they have finished speaking
5. When you think you have all the information, apologise that they have had to call, summarise the reason for the call and ask if that is right.
6. Offer a solution or explain the next steps (“How we can help you is…”).

Handling the initial call – the call handler

Give call centre staff a level of responsibility for handling complaints (before they become complaints!).

Give them the training, support and authority that is appropriate.

Create clear processes and expectations – including a budget for refunds, compensation or gifts.

Practice, practice, practice, feedback, feedback, feedback, praise, praise, praise, support, support, support!

Investigating the complaint

A complaint investigation should:

1. Establish the facts
2. Understand how the customer was affected
3. Put a mutually satisfactory resolution in place
4. Establish the root cause
5. Check if other customers may have been affected
6. Put an action plan in place to remove the root cause
7. Proactively contact other customers who may have been impacted.
8. Be managed by one person who takes ownership

Investigating the complaint

When checking the root cause, it is important to remember that the customer can be complaining about something that HAS gone wrong or something they THINK has gone wrong.

That means you need to check all communications the customer may have seen – including website, social media, leaflets and conversations!

Communicating with the complainant

The one golden rule of complaint investigation is that the customer should NEVER have to chase you.

Give them an initial estimate of how long it will take and agree how often and how you will communicate with them.

On every communication explain the next steps.

Use the phone rather than email or letter.

Clear, regular communication is the key – and never use jargon. Check for understanding (and how the customer is feeling) on every call.

Getting resolution

Review your proposed resolution and ask yourself:

- Does it address all the points the complainant raised?
- Does it put the customer in the position they would have been in if they hadn’t needed to complain?
- If you were the complainant, would you be happy with the proposed resolution?

Getting resolution

When you call the customer:

- Summarise the main points of the complaint and ask them to confirm they are complete and correct.
- Explain your proposal and why you feel it addresses each point – do this one point at a time and each time ask the complainant if they are happy this would address that point.
- Summarise the proposal and ask if they are happy with it.
- If yes, apologise again that they had to complain then clearly explain what will happen next and when (if no, start over again as per the initial call!).
- Send a written confirmation to the customer.

Learning from complaints

1. Make sure that the investigation finds the root cause. It's normally:
   - Something that went wrong
   - A policy or process that is business rather than customer focused
   - A communication breakdown.

2. Make sure any changes required are prioritised

3. Tell your customers about the changes you have made. Admitting your mistakes and showing that you have learned from them is a powerful way to strengthen your relationship with your customers.

Questions to ask yourself

1. Do we keep the promises we make?
2. Is it easy for a customer to get information or help?
3. Do we tell customers what will happen, when and how?
4. If it was me who had complained, would I tell others how well it was handled?
5. Do we use active listening and show empathy?
6. Do customers ever have to chase us about their complaint?
7. Do we really get to the root cause of why a complaint happened?
8. Do we always review the solution we are offering to make sure it covers all the points the customer has raised?
9. Do we really learn from our complaints?
10. Do we show customers that we have learned?

Thank you!

I've been Nigel Greenwood, you've been great!

What could I do better?

What else could I have done?