#### **Directorate of Housing**

## **Brief description of Directorate and Service Framework**

Caerphilly Homes is the brand name for the council's housing division. Some of the services delivered by Caerphilly Homes include Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), Estate Management, Tenancy Enforcement, Rents and Tenancy Support, Tenant and Community Involvement, Older Persons' Housing, Housing Repair Operations, Housing Advice, Homeless Prevention and Common Housing Register, Private Sector Housing, Grants and Loans, Housing Strategy, Affordable Housing and Adaptations

## 1. Number of complaints by stage type, service, and targets met

### Table showing summary of complaints by stage type reference

Stage Type	Count	Count Completed in Target Times	Percentage Completed in Target Times
Stage 1	147	82	55.8%
Stage 2	8	7	87.5%
Escalated from Stage 1 to 2	22	13	59.1%
Totals	177	102	57.6%

<sup>\*</sup>Target response rates for the period of 2022/23 were 46.9%

## Tables showing summary of complaints by service, for each stage type

Service	Count Stage 1	Count Completed in Target Times	Percentage Completed in Target Times
Adaptations	4	4	100.0%
Allocations	6	5	83.3%
Antisocial Behaviour	4	4	100.0%
Grants	3	3	100.0%
Homelessness	4	2	50.0%
Housing Management	26	14	53.8%
Leaseholder	2	0	0.0%
Heating	9	8	88.9%
Private Landlord	4	4	100.0%
Response Repairs	83	36	43.4%
WHQS External	2	2	100.0%
Totals	147	82	55.8%

Service	Count Stage 2	Count Completed in Target Times	Percentage Completed in Target Times
Adaptations	1	0	0.0%
Allocations	1	0	0.0%
Antisocial Behaviour	1	1	100.0%
Housing Management	10	7	70.0%
Leaseholder	1	1	100.0%
Response Repairs	12	8	66.7%
WHQS External	3	2	66.7%
Totals	30	20	66.7%

Generally, where target response times were not met, it has been identified that it was due to awaiting further information from other officers, other departments, or the complainants themselves.

In the previous report there was a notable drop in the compliance rate from the previous 6-month period however our compliance rate has increased in the last 6 months by over 10%. We acknowledge there is still a significant improvement needed however we will continue to strive to increase this figure. One of the key areas reported within the last 6 monthly report was the Response Repairs team compliance rate, where the target figure significantly dropped from 80% to 29.5%. This has slightly improved in the last 6 months from 33.3% to 43.4% however, as mentioned previously, there are ongoing issues with a backlog of repairs which is having a negative impact on the target rate due to managers, supervisors and operatives turning their attention to reducing the backlog and placing their focus on this area as a key priority. Managers and Officers have been participating with the working groups for Mobilising Team Caerphilly to see if future efficiencies can be achieved in this area. Recruitment issues have also been experienced within this area, which is strongly felt throughout this service, evidencing the knock-on effect witnessed with investigation times and target rates. The Repairs Operations Team have also had a number of well experienced staff retire within the last 6 months, highlighting the importance of 'succession' preparation in recruitment going forward. Caerphilly Homes are also involved in the planning and implementation of the Welsh housing Quality Standard 2023 programme. This aims to improve the quality of people's homes, set new targets to address decarbonisation and water efficiency. To achieve this, key members of our Caerphilly Homes team have been allocated roles to assist with achieving this programme. Other service areas have also witnessed an improvement in compliance rates, Housing Management have seen a slight improvement, increasing from 48.3% to 53.8%. As previously mentioned, key members of the Housing Management team continue to be involved in the planning and implementation of the changes required for Caerphilly Homes to successfully introduce the Renting Homes Act 2016. Although the Renting Homes Act and subsequent legislation has bedded in, there have been numerous unintended consequences regarding the interpretation of the legislation, some of which is currently the subject of a court case in the High Court taken by several community landlords. As such, we continue to monitor the developments and make changes to reflect this. The introduction of this legislation and continued review is paramount and therefore has taken priority over some other duties. The Housing Department has also commissioned a new computer system called CX. Managers and officers have been involved with the building and testing of the system via workshops and group meetings, this new system was introduced in October 2022 and ongoing testing, adjustments and implementation continue to ensure Caerphilly Homes has an efficient housing recording system. These changes have been managed whilst operating on a reduced staffing capacity due to recruitment challenges which are being experienced nationwide. To encourage improvements in target response times, data will be provided monthly to managers and directors who attend SMB and HMT to discuss cases which fall short of meeting the target deadlines and to establish if trends can be identified in this area. Managers/Officers will continue to be offered training sessions provided either by the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) or us to ensure consistency and customer focus, ultimately improving quality of complaint investigations, and reducing escalation of complaints. Managers/Officers were previously provided with a list of open cases for their section on a fortnightly bases which included brief details of the case when it was received and the target date for closure. This approach has now been replaced with the new complaints system that was implemented in May 2024 and we will review the achievement of target rates within the next report.

#### Table showing how the complaints were received.

By source	Count Stage 1	Count Stage 2	Count Escalated Stage 1 to Stage 2
Telephone	72	2	8
Email	60	5	14
Letter	7	1	0
On-line	8	0	0
Contact Centre	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Totals	147	8	22

*In 2022/2023, the main source of contact was via telephone and this has remained unchanged.		

## 2. Key complaints - identified by type or theme

- Residents unhappy with delay in works being initiated for damp/condensation and mould.
- Quality/lack of support for housing applicants/homeless applicants.
- Motorhome/general cars being parked on grassed housing land grass not being maintained. Carpark and general grassed area not being maintained at rear of property.
- Residents concerned with leaks in their private properties following works being carried out in an adjoining council property.
- Condition of property prior to a mutual exchange unidentified repairs required before new contract holder took over.
- Delays with fitting exterior doors.
- Resident concerned with delay in re-banding of housing application as allocations officer absent due to sickness.
- Family member unhappy with letter sent regarding empty private property following family death.
- Leaseholder unhappy with the services received from Leasehold Services and Housing Repairs Operations team.
- Resident unhappy with location of parking lines as they felt it favoured other residents.
- Residents disappointed that scaffolding had been erected and removed without rectifying the problem.
- Residents raising concerns with delays in repairing or replacing windows or external doors causing an increase in heating bills.
- Residents concerned with delays in visible action following reports of a neighbour's garden being overgrown and time it takes to implement the garden procedure.
- Incorrect information provided by Housing Advice Officer.
- Resident unhappy with the service they have received from the Housing Repairs Operations team including delays in undertaking repair work, not allocating enough time to complete repairs, and missing agreed appointments without prior notification.

In terms of key identified trends, reports of damp and mould within the home has been highlighted previously. In response, Caerphilly homes has produced a procedure which will ensure that wherever possible, customers are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould and will drive forward an agenda of proactive action to tackle/manage the causes of damp and mould. We will ensure that all employees have an awareness of the procedure and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp mould & condensation and to support our customers. Technical staff will be trained and competent in the diagnosis of damp, condensation, and mould issues; to include HHSRS, specialist damp training and the use of specialist damp equipment. The procedure is designed to ensure Caerphilly Homes has a robust effective way of managing damp and mould cases within its housing stock and will be monitored to ensure the procedure is meeting the needs of our contract holders. The implementation of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 programme will also assist in addressing issues linked with preventing damp and mould growth in the home.

Caerphilly Homes Customer Services has also noted an increase in the number of complaints due to delayed services. Following this, we have spoken with managers who advise on occasion we are reliant on using internal services which are experiencing their own challenges to provide an efficient service. In these circumstances, if we were able to outsource our required services, we would be able to resolve the issue in a timely manner and in some cases, at a reduced cost. It is acknowledged that in this current financial climate, the Authority will be cutting back services and this may have the potential to become a systemic issue across the Authority.

# Number by Category (Commissioner Case Type)

# Table showing complaints by Commissioner Case Type, for prescribed Categories

	Category	Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2
1.	Collaborative Working	0
2.	Decision Making	12
3.	Delay in Service Provision	40
4.	Officer/Contractors Conduct with public (including sensitivity/empathy of staff/politeness)	2
5a.	Following Council Policies	1
5b.	Following relevant Legislation	3
6.	Accessibility of Services	0
7.	Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information	2
8.	Quality of Work	116
9.	Openness/Fairness and Honesty	0
10.	Compliance with Complaints procedure	0
11.	Combination	0
	Totals	176

<sup>\*</sup>Quality of work (8) remains the most common category for reason for contact.

## 3. Number by Outcome and lessons learned comments

Table showing complaints by Outcome Data sets as categorised by the Complaints Standards Authority.

Outcome Data	Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2
Upheld	38
Not upheld	126
Totals	164

<sup>\*</sup>Please note, 13 complaints were withdrawn.

The following table shows more information regarding the complaints counts above, that were, Upheld, Not Upheld, Non-specific, Investigation Not Merited and Investigation Discontinued, by Service Area.

Stage 1 Complaints

Service	Upheld	Not Upheld
Adaptations	0	4
Allocations	2	4
Energy Works	0	0
Grants	0	3
Housing Management	6	18
Leaseholder	0	1
Private Landlord	1	3
Rents	0	0
Response Repairs	24	56
WHQS External	0	2
Heating	0	5
Antisocial Behaviour	0	3
Homeless Prevention	0	3
Totals	33	102

## **Stage 2 Complaints**

Service	Upheld	Not Upheld
Adaptations	0	1
Allocations	0	1
Antisocial Behaviour	0	1
Housing Management	4	6
Leaseholder	0	1
Private Landlord	0	1
Response Repairs	1	10
WHQS External	0	3
Totals	5	24

List of lessons learned. Comment on key findings resulting from the complaints in this reporting period, that may help curtail, prevent, or impede future repeats.

Details of Case	Lessons Learned	Category
Contract holder had	Lessons learned from the	3.Delay in Service Provision
chimney removed which	complaint; Contractors should	

has now allegedly resulted in an on-going leak into the private property next door which it is believed is privately rented.	declare any damage caused. Conversations were held with the scaffolders regarding the damage caused.	
The kitchen wall cupboard fell off injuring contract holder and a young family member.	Lessons learned from the complaint; Tradespeople to ensure they use the correct fixings. Foreman met with the tradespeople to discuss and to consider additional training requirements.	8. Quality of work
Contract holder advised property not inspected prior to mutual exchange (ME) deeming it not fit to live in and still waiting for repairs to be completed	Ensure that proper and full inspections are competed prior to allowing mutual exchanges to take place. Conversations with Housing Repair Operations about prioritising Mutual Exchange inspections to prevent this happening again	8. Quality of work
Inspector visited in January in relation to damp/condensation and sent report through for works to be completed. Still waiting for any work to begin	We need a better means of conveying supplementary information to the surveyor (in this case a Damp report) than simply relying on email. In this case it was assumed the same surveyor would recall after the no access due to COVID however when the recall came the surveyor was absent at the time and someone else called. If supplementary information could be added to the associated documents in Total, then it could be delivered with the job to the surveyor's tablet.  This is something we should consider for Civica moving forward.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Operatives called out to Contract Holder property to install trickle vents, but they were not able to install them as they were the wrong size. This was the 4th or 5th time this had happened. The Contract Holder wanted a rent arrears reduction considered due to mould in the property.	Lessons learned from the complaint; Initial Inspections must contain full description and measurements of materials required. Inspectors will be advised of this going forward.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Occupier complained about motorhome parked on housing land which stops the grass from being cut	No lessons learned – isolated incident	8. Quality of work

and is an eyesore - this has been reported before.		
Owner Occupier unhappy as works carried out on neighbouring property causing their gettering to leak	Cleck of works (COW) to check alinement of gutters prior to signing off works. This is to be included in ongoing toolbox talks with Clerk Of Works.	2. Decision Making
Issues and delays with fitting front door.	Lessons learned from the complaint; measurements should be accurate before orders are placed and information given to Contract Holders must also be accurate. Future Doors will be surveyed and measured by the supplier.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Applicant waiting to be re banded but officer absent with no one else able to undertake work.	Mental Health Assessor was on long term absence and there was no replacement who could step in. Potentially consider using agency staff if in similar situation again, to be agreed by Head of Housing.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Family member unhappy with letter sent regarding father's property left empty following his death.	The letter will be reviewed to address the concerns raised. A statement to be added to the standard letter to clarify the date of the information. This would hopefully avoid any upset. The letter can be reviewed to clarify that anyone actively dealing with their empty property or has genuine reasons for the property being empty can ignore that part of the letter.	8. Quality of work
Contract holder unhappy with service received whilst trying to organise the wallpapering of daughter's bedroom.	Lessons learned from the complaint; to ensure resources are available to complete a repair in reasonable time.	8. Quality of work
Resident remains dissatisfied with the state of the area at the rear of their property.	Lessons learned will be that early verbal communication is key to achieving a resolution before the matter is escalated to the corporate complaint's procedure.	8. Quality of work
Leaseholder unhappy with the services received from Leasehold manager and Housing Repair Operations - asked for complaint to be escalated before stage 1 investigation completed.	Ensure Leaseholders follow insurance procedure. In this case communication is key with Leaseholder and Housing Repair Operations officers.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Owner/Occupier paid for front and rear wall to be repaired when it was actually a joint responsibility issue and is now being charged for chimney	Incorrect information provided originally regarding ownership	2 Decision Making

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	8 Quality of work
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	3 Delay in service provision
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Engure we work through repairs	3 Delay in service provision
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Staff error. We should have	3 Delay in service provision
provided RHWA information on	,
7th November and not 30th. Staff	
to be reminded of correct	
procedures immediately	
error in relation to the bay	8 Quality of work
markings no lessons to be	
learned	
	3 Delay in service provision
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	3 Delay in service provision
	o Delay iii service provision
and workload being investigated.	
Better communication required	8 Quality of work
with contract holders and	
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	provided RHWA information on 7th November and not 30th. Staff to be reminded of correct procedures immediately error in relation to the bay markings no lessons to be learned  Maladministration - staff to be mindful of acting to emails sent to them in a timely manner, also to flag important emails in red. Staff to set up appropriate tasks in calendar if needed to look at their call backs etc  Better communication with contract holders and contractors. Training is ongoing for surveyors and workload being investigated.

ovtra gas boing wasted to		
extra gas being wasted to heat home.		
Contract holder waiting for repairs to fix water coming into property.	Better communication with CH and Contractors. Training is ongoing for your surveyors and workload being investigated.	3 Delay in service provision
Resident concerned with car parking and the installation of white lines in parking bays.	CCBC only use 1 company for line painting and have to depend on them to prioritise their workload	3 delay in service provision
Poor job carried out when repairing the guttering	Foreman added to toolbox talks about work ethic and manors while working. Mentoring operatives and highlighting issues in toolbox talks.	8 Quality of work
Waiting since July for patio doors to be repaired. Not currently useable and calls on a weekly basis for update but never a call back	Better communication required with CH and Contractors. New supplier is in place and working through the backlog of work.	3 Delay in service provision
Poor standard of repairs and not turning up to appointments	Better communication with CH and Contractors. Training is ongoing for the surveyors and workload being investigated.	8 Quality of work
Contract holder waiting over a year for works to be competed on unsafe and unusable garden	Training to be provided to meet the current Fitness of homes for human habitation standard. Training is ongoing for your surveyors and workload being investigated.	3 Delay in service provision
Contract holder concerned with ongoing poor quality of fitting of front and rear door - costing money with heating due to draughts.	Installations to fitted to the required standard. Tradespeople reminded of their duties in Toolbox Talks.	8 Quality of work
Contract holder waiting for over a year for repairs to wet room as it was leaking into hallway. Staff unhelpful when calling for updates	Better communication with CH and Contractors. Training is ongoing for the surveyors and workload being investigated.	3 Delay in service provision
Poor workmanship and delay in repairing kitchen.	Forman to highlight what his operative did incorrectly and the impact it has caused. Forman to inform all operatives regarding a job left with issues.	3 Delay in service provision
Following a gap being left after repair work, rats have got in and damaged toys, feels its unhygenic.in the home.	Forman to highlight what his operative did incorrectly and the impact it has caused. Forman to inform all operatives regarding a job left with issues.	8 Quality of work

Outstanding repairs to shed doors, back door, bedroom door frame	Forman to highlight what his operative did incorrectly and the impact it has caused. Forman to inform all operatives regarding a job left with issues.	3 Delay in service provision
Contract holder continuing to experience damp even following the complaint made in Jan 2023.	Surveyors to receive more training on damp and mould, also workload. Surveyors are booked onto courses and workload will be reduced due to recruiting surveyors.	8 Quality of work
Contract holder unhappy with mess left after works carried out in the property	Foreman to highlight what his operative did incorrectly and the impact it has caused. Foreman to inform all operatives Toolbox talk, stock of over shoes etc.	8 Quality of work
Contract holder unhappy with being asked to move fence as believes it is in the correct position.	isolated incident	2 Decision Making
Contract holder unhappy with being charged rent for 2 properties as tried to find where keys had to be returned to.	Team members will be reminded that they must review, prioritise, and where required reply, to all emails and any other type of enquiry when other colleagues are absent from work, regardless of patch or area. The Relet Checklist which is signed by contract holders and team members at the point of sign-up, will be amended to evidence that appropriate advice on the return of keys and ongoing contractual obligations has been provided, when involving a contract holder transferring from one Caerphilly Homes property to another.	8 Quality of service

# 4. Identified relationships to Equalities or Welsh Language

Table showing a count and list of findings resulting from the complaints in this reporting period, that specifically relate to the Equalities or Welsh Language protected characteristics.

Characteristic Strand	Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2
Age	0
Disability	10
Gender Reassignment	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership	0
Pregnancy and Maternity	0
Race	0
Religion/Belief or Non-belief	0

Sex	0
Sexual Orientation	0
Welsh Language	0
Totals	10

#### Extracts from cases linked to the Disability characteristic:

- Following a toilet cistern being fitted in July 2021, an increase in the water bills were noted approx. 12 months later due to a possible leak. Investigations revealed at least 18 months had passed before the Contract Holder had reported this issue. The son said we had not considered the Contract Holder's vulnerabilities whilst investigating however our records showed the Contract Holders had reported other issues to the response repairs department during the same period. This issue was considered at both stage 1 and Stage 2 and was not upheld.
- Friend of homeless applicant concerned for their welfare and their pregnant daughter. The
  applicant has autism, and his friend felt this was not being considered. We advised the case
  officer assigned the case was specialised in working with people who have mental health
  issues and ADHD. This complaint was considered at Stage 1 and was found to be not
  upheld.
- Contract Holder advised contractor took bathroom floor up and they have been left unable to
  use their shower. Both residents are registered disabled and need access to the shower.
   This contact was recorded as a stage 1 complaint and was not upheld as the repair was
  carried out in a timely manner.
- Son of Contract Holder made contact to advise his visually impaired mother fell over tools
  which were left on the floor by the gas engineer. This was recorded as a stage 1 complaint
  and not upheld as evidence did not conclude the cause.
- Contact Holder raised a number of issues which were investigated as a stage 2 complaint.
  These issues included car parking issues, alleged antisocial behaviour from neighbours and
  their children and harassment from CCBC staff. Following in-depth investigations into all
  aspects of the allegations, the complaint was not upheld.
- Contract holder complained the kitchen was not up to standard and the cupboard fell off the wall causing injury. This complaint was logged as not upheld and the contract holder escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process. This com was again not upheld.
- Resident was unhappy with the lift fitted externally at their home, after further investigations, it was discovered the resident had been misusing the lift controllers, causing the system to need a reset. As such, further demonstrations were provided, and the complaint was not upheld.
- Resident was experiencing housing issues including over crowding which was affecting his
  mental health. The resident felt he was not getting adequate responses from the housing
  officer. This complaint was investigated and not upheld.
- 5. Annex Referrals to Ombudsman, complaints resulting from appeals and examples of relevant items (points to note) specific to this reporting period

Identify how many referrals to the Ombudsman and list and append any relevant supplementary information here, namely, points to note, or an example data set.

Fourteen cases were referred to the Ombudsman for Housing in this reporting period. The Ombudsman decided not to investigate and subsequently closed their records for thirteen of these cases. One case was investigated and upheld by the Ombudsman.

The first Ombudsman case related to a delay in completing repairs reported and acknowledged some of the repairs should have been undertaken before the property was allocated. As part of our investigatory procedure, we apologised to the Contract Holder, updated them on the one outstanding repair and offered a £108.00 payment redress for decoration. Considering this the Ombudsman decided not to investigate the complaint as they felt our actions were fair in redressing the issues raised.

The second Ombudsman case was regarding a Contract Holder reporting the presence of damp and mould in a property before it was allocated. Following the internal investigation responses provided to the Ombudsman, it was decided no further action was required by Caerphilly Homes as they had acted appropriately.

The third case was prematurely taken to the Ombudsman regarding a car remaining on axel stands. The ombudsman passed this contact to Caerphilly Homes for us to engage with the resident and undertake our own investigations.

The fourth and fifth case was of a similar nature as it was prematurely passed to the Ombudsman when our internal procedures had not been exhausted. An owner/occupier advised they had been experiencing damp patches in their bedroom following works undertaken on the neighbouring property.

The sixth contact with the Ombudsman was relating to planning regulations, this was not considered by the Ombudsman due to lack of evidence and contact from the complainant. The ombudsman decided they were not furnished with enough evidence for them to consider their concerns.

The seventh complaint was regarding the placement of a fence in the rear garden. The Contract Holder disagreed with the decision and request to move the fence, and this was initially logged as a Service Request. Following the Ombudsman's consideration, it was decided to accept actions to conclude an early resolution which included an apology for not logging the original contact as a Stage1 complaint and to investigate and provide a stage 1 response to the Contract Holder as per our internal procedure. These actions were completed, and the complaint is now resolved.

The eighth complaint to the Ombudsman was regarding the placement of a homeless applicant outside of the area they wished to live. This complaint was brought prematurely to the Ombudsman as Caerphilly Homes were considering it as a Stage 1 complaint at the time of referral. This complaint was not upheld as our internal procedures had been followed.

The ninth complaint related to outstanding works to be undertake at a property. The Ombudsman made enquiries with us and noted that within our Stage 2 response, we agreed actions to replace undersized radiators and gave a rent-free period in recognition of the disturbance the contract holders had experienced. As such, the Ombudsman felt we had acted appropriately and could not suggest any further recommendations on our part.

The tenth complaint has a very similar outcome as the ninth in that we admitted our failings, made arrangements to put them right and apologised for the inconvenience and disturbance caused. Again, the Ombudsman felt we acted appropriately and acknowledged we had noted lessons learned from this experience. No further action was required from Caerphilly Homes and the Leaseholder confirmed they were satisfied with the works we had carried out in their property.

The eleventh complaint considered by the Ombudsman was regarding the decision not to award succession to a property. This was considered in line with current policies and procedures and the Ombudsman agreed no further action was required on our part as this was a correct made decision.

The twelfth complaint related to the placement of white parking lines within a carpark. The Ombudsman made their enquiries and established this was a premature complaint and passed it to Caerphilly Homes to follow our complaints procedure. The complaint was considered, and we agreed that the lines were not painted in the original location but that it did not impact on the use of the carpark. An apology was issues to the contract holder in light of this.

An owner originally raised a complaint in 1996/1997 which was considered at that time however they wished to raise the same issues again which due to record retention timeframes plus complaint consideration timeframes, was refused. The complainant approached the Ombudsman who agreed with our decision due to the same reasons as originally stated.

The last complaint was again a premature representation to the Ombudsman as Caerphilly Homes were currently investigating a Stage 1 complaint in relation to adaptations to the home. The Ombudsman advised if the resident remain dissatisfied with our decision, they could progress to Stage 2 and then approach them if they remain dissatisfied.

For further information, please contact Gemma Hoare

01443 811436 hoareg@caerphilly.gov.uk