

**Meeting:** Executive, 11 June 24

**Author:** Darren Bird, Alex Clark

**Subject:** Customer complaints forum

## **Background**

As part of our commitment to the Housing Ombudsman complaint code and improving our complaint handling, we advised the Board in July 22 that we would be creating a new Customer complaints forum. This paper gives an update on the progress of this group and the results on their recent findings.

## **Purpose of the group**

The remit of the forum is to be a critical friend, reviewing completed complaints to ensure that we follow the expectations of the Housing ombudsman complaint code, they are dealt with in a sympathetic manner with fair resolutions.

The forum consists of 6 customers.

We continue to provide the forum with updates relating to The Housing Ombudsman. Including information about the new Code coming into effect on 1 April 2024 and changes we are making to ensure continuing compliance with the Code.

The group have recently assisted with review our proposed Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and provided valuable feedback.

## **Scope**

They meet every quarter.

They are provided with ten anonymised complaint cases that have gone through our complaints process and now closed. They receive the headline complaint reason and the complaint number.

The group will agree on five (of the ten) and receive fuller details, including all the notes, correspondence, outcomes, and learnings. They are then required to individually score and assess the following areas of our handling of those complaints:

- Quality of the notes
- Correct correspondence
- Dealt with inside timescales
- Chronology of events
- The outcome
- Fairness in the handling of the complaint
- Putting things right

They also provide a written summary of the scores to give insight.

## Assurance

### Results

The forum has reviewed and scored five complaints and gave their feedback – the table below shows the average score of the group in each area.

Area of review	Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	3.9
Correct correspondence	4.8
Timescales	4.5
Chronology of events	4.1
The Outcome	4.0
Fairness in the handling of complaint	4.3
Putting things right	4.1

### Positive feedback

Treated tenant with respect, decision was fair and well written and easy to read.

### Development feedback

Only one part of the complaint was dealt with, no follow up and sometimes no in chronological order.

### Summary and next steps

The results continue to provide valuable feedback.

In all areas the scores continue to increase

Our top performing complaint scored 175 points (out of an available 175), the poorest complaint scoring 113 points.

The feedback has been shared with the case managers and their managers to recognise where we have managed and dealt with it well, whilst ensuring additional support and training is put in place for the members of staff where we did not score so well.

The forum was informed that the unacceptable behaviour policy and procedure have been agreed by the board. An overview of the policy, when we would consider implementation and what formal actions we can take was provided.

Housing Ombudsman news was shared. Which included an increase of 91% of cases going to the Housing Ombudsman in the last quarter, a Centre for Learning has been created to help Landlords network and attend workshops and we have welcomed Hannah Jones as our Member Responsible for complaints (MRC).

We continue to invite senior team members to attend the forum and provide an insight into their area of the business. The forum welcomed, Ben Gullam, Senior Neighbourhoods Manager (Supported Housing) and Marc Robins, Income and Lettings Manager. The forum engaged well and reported they find the visits

## Assurance

interesting and provides a good insight into each area of the business which benefits their assessment of closed complaints.

The forum has decided that the next set of closed complaints will be scored as a group. This will ensure a consistent approach is used when evaluating the cases.

### **Options and recommendations**

Note this report.

### **Appendix**

Appendix A – Complaints reviewed and how the Customer complaints forum operates.

## Complaints reviewed

Complaint number	Nature of complaint
18653	Gardening
18355	Staff attitude
18302	Damp and mould
18600	Storage heaters
18074	Subcontractor delays

## How the Customer complaints forum operates

They meet every quarter.

They are provided with ten anonymised complaint cases that have gone through our complaints process and now closed. They receive the headline complaint reason and the complaint number.

The group will agree on five (of the ten) and receive fuller details, including all the notes, correspondence, outcomes, and learnings.

They will assess and feedback on these elements:

### Quality of notes.

- are they clear/could they be misinterpreted.
- contain enough detail
- would you have expected more information
- notes should be factual not an opinion

### Correct correspondence sent

- acknowledgement
- response letter
- closure letter
- did we promote the Housing Ombudsman service

### Correspondence sent within agreed timescales

- acknowledgement sent within **5** working days
- response letter sent within **10** working days
- extra time agreed is required

### Could the complaint be followed from start to finish

- Chronological order

**Complaint outcome**

- Does the outcome look and feel right
- Would you have done anything differently

**Was the complaint dealt with Fairly**

- Have we been impartial
- Did we compromise and show flexibility
- Was the complaint dealt with in a way the customer could understand
- Was the language clear and concise

**Did we Put Things Right**

- Have all points raised been addressed
- Was the customer compensated correctly

## Appendix A

Each of these elements are scored by the forum member, based on this scoring matrix.

Score	Definition – could include these elements
<b>1</b>	Timescales not maintained, letters not sent, limited notes, no learning outcome recorded.
<b>2</b>	Most parts could have been improved on, lacking information or not clear with our approach.
<b>3</b>	Some information missing, the case has been fairly dealt with and things have been put right.
<b>4</b>	Most elements were adhered to but there was room for improvement in some parts.
<b>5</b>	All letters and timescales have been adhered to, clear and detailed notes, case has been dealt with fairly and things have been put right, we have apologised.

Each forum member will sum up each complaint with a summary of their score(s)