

Meeting: Executive, 24 October 24	Author: Darren Bird, Alex Clark
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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.

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.

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	June 2024 Score (out of 5)	October 2024 Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	3.9	4.1
Correct correspondence	4.8	4.5
Timescales	4.5	4.5
Chronology of events	4.1	4.3
The Outcome	4.0	4.4
Fairness in the handling of complaint	4.3	4.1
Putting things right	4.1	3.8

Positive feedback

Complaints were dealt with in a timely manner, well documented and were considerate of customers feelings and opinions.

Development feedback

To address all issues raised in the complaint and consider offering more home visits to customers.

Summary of meeting

The results continue to offer valuable insights. Our top complaint received a score of 136 out of 140, while the lowest scored 98. This feedback has been shared with case managers and their supervisors to acknowledge our successes and to ensure additional support and training for staff in areas where performance was lacking.

Satisfaction checks are now conducted 20 days after the complaint response letter is sent, which has proven effective in helping the complaints team identify any lingering issues and reassure customers. An update on this initiative was shared at the forum.

We also encourage senior team members to participate in the forum and share their insights. Recently, Jason Humphries, the Neighbourhoods Team Manager, presented, and his session was both well-received and informative. Previously, the forum had decided to review the next set of closed complaints together to maintain a consistent evaluation approach. This strategy has led to productive discussions, and the forum agreed to continue using this method going forward.

Options and recommendations

Note this report and agree that quarterly updates will come to the Exec team.

Appendix

Appendix A – Complaints reviewed and scoring criteria

Complaints reviewed

Complaint number	Nature of complaint
17503	Grounds maintenance
18141	Workmanship
17861	Staff attitude
18272	Compensation
20001	Charge dispute

Complaints are assessed using these criteria:

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.

Forum members assess each of these elements using the scoring matrix.

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