

Meeting: Executive, 14 March 2023**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, along with the first set of results on their 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 four customers, the aim is to grow the group to six during the course of this year. They have been together for the last 5 months where we have met regularly to agree their roles and responsibilities whilst ensuring there is no conflict with the work of our scrutiny team.

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 its first set of complaints and given feedback – the table below shows the average score of the group in each area.

Assurance

Area of review	Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	3.3
Correct correspondence	3.5
Timescales	3.7
Chronology of events	3.8
The Outcome	3.8
Fairness in the handling of complaint	3.6
Putting things right	3.7

Positive feedback

Clear concise notes, easy to follow, dealt with fairly, flexible in approach, handled swiftly and sensitively, pleased with generosity of compensation. Lovely case to review.

Development feedback

No communication, no notes, response time unacceptable. Spelling needs to improve, hard to follow.

Summary and next steps

These are the first set of results from this group, they did provide valuable impartial feedback that was mixed across the complaints they reviewed. Our top performing complaint scored 132 points (out of an available 140), the poorest complaint scoring 52 points.

This does reflect the challenge when complaints are dealt with across a broader range of staff outside a dedicated complaint handling team, they are generally dealt with by managers with differing experience levels.

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.

A log of agreed actions has been created and will be reviewed at the next quarterly forum, once the group are satisfied that the action has been completed, they will approve its sign off.

We will be working with our marketing and comms team to share and promote the Customer complaints forum and their findings.

Options and recommendations

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

Appendix

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

Appendix A

Complaints reviewed

Complaint number	Nature of complaint
15470	Keeping bees / staff attitude
16015	Joint to sole tenancy / staff attitude
16747	Damp & mould / Quality of response
16476	Decoration of ceiling / Workmanship
16052	Bathroom repairs / Workmanship

How the Customer complaints forum will operate

They will 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

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

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