

<b>Meeting:</b> Executive, January 25	<b>Author:</b> 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 5 customers. *We are currently looking for a 6<sup>th</sup> member and have 2 interested customers.*

We continue to provide the forum with regular updates regarding The Housing Ombudsman, ensuring that members remain informed about any relevant developments, key decisions, and policy changes. These updates may include case determinations, best practice recommendations, emerging trends in complaints handling, and any new guidance issued by the Ombudsman. By keeping the forum engaged and up to date, we aim to support transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in our approach to resolving customer concerns effectively.

## **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	October 2024 Score (out of 5)	January 2025 Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	4.1	4.7
Correct correspondence	4.5	4.8
Timescales	4.5	<b>5.0</b>
Chronology of events	4.3	4.7
The Outcome	4.4	<b>5.0</b>
Fairness in the handling of complaint	4.1	4.6
Putting things right	3.8	4.5

### Positive feedback

- “I would give the case manager a 10/5 if that was possible”

### Development feedback

- We will ensure that notes are clear and provide a complete account of the situation. The forum highlighted that, in some cases, it was unclear whether issues had been fully resolved. To address this, we will review this aspect more closely through our satisfaction checks.

The results continue to provide valuable feedback, giving us insight into our case management from our customers' perspectives.

The highest-scoring complaint received 70 out of 70 points. We achieved 100% compliance with timescales, and the forum supported all upheld and not upheld outcomes.

The feedback has been shared with case managers and their managers to recognise areas of strong performance and identify opportunities for improvement. For lower-scoring areas, we are providing additional support and training to enhance staff skills and service delivery. This will include training on 'Handling Challenging Customers.'

## Summary of meeting

### Rant and Rave

An overview of our Rant and Rave feedback from October to December was shared, with a total of nine customer responses received. Three customers gave a score of 5, while four provided a score of 1. All scores of 1 and 2 are thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action is taken as necessary.

Positive feedback – “Just impressed with the way it was processes; the communication was very good”

Development feedback – “Nothing done that was told would be done”

### Satisfaction checks

Satisfaction checks continue to provide valuable feedback, allowing us to identify and address any outstanding actions or concerns raised by customers. We recognise that many customers prefer to respond via email, so in addition to making phone calls, we also follow up with an email whenever we have an email address on record if there is no response to the initial call.

### Special guest

We continue to invite senior team members to attend the forum and share insights into their areas of the business. The forum had the pleasure of welcoming Nathan Anscombe, Head of Programme Delivery, whose presentation was highly regarded as both insightful and engaging. Explaining, what are housing association planned programmes, their purpose and The Decent homes Standard.

Previously, the forum agreed to collectively review the next set of closed complaints to ensure a consistent approach to case evaluation. This method proved highly successful, sparking constructive and lively discussions when used in the January forum. While the group found this approach engaging, time constraints mean that members will now be asked to prepare their feedback in advance of the meeting.

### Housing Ombudsman News

The Housing Ombudsman intends to use learning from complaints handled as well as ideas and suggestions from residents and landlords to generate Good Practice. Providing detail on how to achieve good service delivery.

### Maladministration order

A brief overview of our recent order was presented to the forum, outlining the specific actions we have been directed to take. This included a summary of the key findings, the required steps for compliance, and our planned approach to addressing the order effectively. By sharing this information, we aim to ensure transparency and keep the forum informed about our commitments, progress, and any necessary improvements to enhance our service delivery.

### **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

## Appendix A

### Complaints reviewed

<b>Complaint number</b>	<b>Nature of complaint</b>
20801	Contractor works
20764	Car parking
20716	Customer unable to use bathroom following upgrade
21006	Damp and mould
20918	EV charging point

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**

## Appendix A

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

## Appendix A

Each of these elements is evaluated by forum members according to the 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.