

Meeting: Executive, April 25	Author: 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 currently consists of four customers, with two new members set to join in July 2025. All forum members will be provided with an induction pack and ongoing support to help them understand their role, contribute effectively to discussions, and feel confident in providing feedback that shapes our services.

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	January 2025 Score (out of 5)	April 2025 Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	4.7	4.2
Correct correspondence	4.8	4.9
Timescales	5.0	4.3
Chronology of events	4.7	4.3
The Outcome	5.0	4.4
Fairness in the handling of complaint	4.6	4.6
Putting things right	4.5	4.5

Positive feedback

The forum was pleased to see that all mandatory correspondence is consistently being sent to customers. This demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency and ensures that customers are kept fully informed throughout the complaints process. It also reflects good practice in meeting regulatory requirements and helps to build trust and confidence in our approach to handling complaints.

Development feedback

The forum noted a decline in scoring for the review area focused on the quality of case notes. Feedback highlighted that the notes often lack sufficient clarity and detail, making it difficult to understand the rationale behind the decisions made. In several cases, the absence of background information or context meant that forum members were unable to fully grasp how conclusions were reached.

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

The highest-scoring complaint achieved 97 out of a possible 105 points, with one forum member awarding full marks, 5 out of 5, for every element of the case.

During the last two meetings, the forum decided to score cases collectively to ensure greater consistency. This approach revealed some inconsistencies in scoring but also sparked valuable discussions, leading to more rigorous assessments. The

shift toward stricter scoring is viewed positively, as it will help drive continuous improvement in performance.

The feedback has been shared with case managers and their managers to highlight areas of strong performance and identify where improvements can be made. For lower-scoring areas, we're offering additional support and training to help strengthen staff skills and improve service delivery. This will include case manager training sessions and one-to-one support from the complaints team. An email has also been sent to all teams, encouraging them to discuss the importance of clear and comprehensive notes to support transparency, consistency, and effective communication.

Summary of meeting

Tenant satisfaction Measures (TSM) and Rant and Rave

Darren Bird attended the meeting and gave an overview of Rant and Rave, as well as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). He emphasised the importance of customer feedback in helping us understand how our services are perceived and where improvements are needed. Feedback provides invaluable insights that allow us to identify and track trends, gauge customer sentiment, and support informed decision-making for future service development. The forum was also informed that the TSMs show an overall customer satisfaction rate of 87%.

Housing Ombudsman News

The latest Housing Ombudsman news is always shared with the forum, and at this meeting, we focused on the recent publication, Learning from Safety Complaints. The discussion highlighted the vital importance of effectively managing complaints related to the "Big 6" safety areas: fire, gas, asbestos, legionella, electrical, and LOLER. Poor handling of these issues can lead to serious consequences, including non-compliance with Awaab's Law. Landlords are expected to prioritise the safety of both customers and buildings by learning from previous complaints and taking proactive measures to mitigate future risks. Clear, well-defined, and accessible policies and procedures are essential to ensure robust complaint resolution and ongoing compliance.

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
20979	Pest control in communal flats
21001	Injury from internal door
21139	Section 20/leaseholder costs
21372	GDPR/safeguarding handling
21021	Purchasing of shared ownership home

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

Appendix A

Did we Put Things Right

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

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

Appendix A