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| <b>Meeting:</b> Executive, July 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 currently consists of four customer members. We had hoped to welcome two new participants at our July session; however, although both had expressed interest, neither chose to proceed. We have since reached out to two other customers and hope they will join us for the October session. Recruitment efforts will continue, with support from the Involvement Team if needed.

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.

At each session, we invite a member of staff to join as a 'guest speaker' and provide an overview of their area of the business. These sessions have been well-received, with staff fully engaging and their presentations often sparking valuable questions and discussions within the forum.

## **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                        | April 2025<br>Score (out of 5) | July 2025<br>Score (out of 5) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Quality of notes                      | 4.2                            | 4.8                           |
| Correct correspondence                | 4.9                            | 5.0                           |
| Timescales                            | 4.3                            | 4.9                           |
| Chronology of events                  | 4.3                            | 4.8                           |
| The Outcome                           | 4.4                            | 4.7                           |
| Fairness in the handling of complaint | 4.6                            | 4.7                           |
| Putting things right                  | 4.5                            | 4.1                           |

### Positive feedback

The forum observed that staff have consistently taken accountability for the issues raised, responded with empathy and understanding, and produced well-structured, clearly written responses. They also highlighted that meaningful learning outcomes have been identified and documented, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and better customer service.

### Development feedback

The forum raised concerns around the handling of some highly sensitive cases, particularly where issues remained unresolved at the conclusion of the complaints process. It was noted that, in some instances, there was no clear follow-up action recorded, and initial case records lacked clarity and structure. In a few cases, the documentation was not presented in chronological order, making it difficult to fully understand the sequence of events and how decisions were reached. The forum recommended greater attention to record-keeping, especially in complex or sensitive cases, to ensure transparency, accountability, and a clear audit trail.

The results continue to offer valuable insights, helping us better understand how our case management is experienced from the customer's perspective. This

feedback is a vital tool for learning and improvement and will be shared with both case managers and their line managers to inform practice.

We remain committed to supporting staff in delivering high-quality responses and will continue to offer one-to-one support where needed. This tailored support ensures that learning is embedded and that we are continually improving the way we communicate with and respond to our customers.

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

The feedback has been shared with case managers and their managers to highlight areas of strong performance and identify where improvements can be made. Areas for improvement have also been discussed during weekly group managers meeting to ensure that all case managers are reminded of the importance of good record keeping and providing a complete and full resolution for our customers.

### **Summary of meeting**

#### Danny Williams – Compliance Supervisor

He highlighted the crucial role compliance plays in keeping customers safe and ensuring Selwood meets all legal and regulatory responsibilities. The forum was particularly impressed by the team's dedication and the fantastic work being carried out behind the scenes, especially their achievement of 100% compliance across all areas.

A huge thank you to Danny and the Compliance Team for everything they do to keep our homes and communities safe.

#### Housing Ombudsman News

The Secretary of State has approved a further extension of Richard Blakeway's term as Housing Ombudsman, which will now run until the end of July 2026.

#### Spotlight Report – May 2025: Repairing Trust

This report highlights the strong shared interest between residents, landlords, and contractors in driving positive change. By focusing on common values such as respect, empathy, clear communication, safety, and mutual trust, the report suggests that relationships across the sector can be significantly improved.

Last month, the government also published its draft guidance on Awaab's Law, which will come into force on 27 October 2025. The new law will require all social landlords to address emergency hazards, including damp and mould, within set timeframes to ensure tenants' homes are safe and healthy.

### **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

## **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  |
|----------|--|
| <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. |