

Meeting: Executive, January 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 five customer members. We welcomed a new member in our January session. Our new member is already proving to be an enthusiastic member of the group

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	October 2025 Score (out of 5)	January 2026 Score (out of 5)
Quality of notes	4.7	4.6
Correct correspondence	4.8	4.9
Timescales	4.7	5.0
Chronology of events	4.7	4.6
The Outcome	4.6	4.6
Fairness in the handling of complaint	4.7	4.4
Putting things right	4.6	4.2

Positive feedback

The forum praised how thoroughly complaints were handled, highlighting Selwood’s strong sense of accountability. They noted our proactive communication and genuine, caring approach, with detailed resolutions delivered alongside excellent listening skills. Case managers demonstrated a clear understanding of each situation, resulting in responses that were thoughtful, effective, and left a very positive impression.

Development feedback

There were some areas identified for development, including the use of legal jargon, which, while explained, could be made clearer for customers unfamiliar with legal terms. Additionally, notes could be improved by ensuring they are comprehensive, detailed, and recorded in chronological order. Providing more explicit learning outcomes and clarifying the initial complaint details would also help make the process clearer and easier to follow.

In response to the forum’s feedback, the complaints team now takes responsibility for issuing closure letters and making the final decision to close complaints. By overseeing closures and introducing satisfaction checks, the team has gained clear oversight of the process, ensuring that solutions provided by case managers are fully completed, notes are thorough, and all actions are followed through. These improvements are designed to enhance consistency, accountability, and ultimately

provide a better experience, helping to achieve higher satisfaction for our customers.

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 complaint responses and will continue to provide one-to-one support where needed. All new case managers attend complaint training delivered by the Learning and Development team, with additional, more detailed training provided by the Complaints Team. This tailored approach helps embed learning and ensures we continue to improve how we communicate with and respond to our customers.

The highest-scoring complaint achieved 137 out of a possible 140 points, with two 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. 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

Member response for complaints (MRC)

Our Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), Hannah Jones, attended the meeting. The role of the MRC is important in ensuring that complaints are handled effectively and that we learn from the feedback we receive. Hannah had the opportunity to listen to the forum's feedback and see first-hand their commitment and enthusiasm for being involved. Following the meeting, Hannah asked to attend the next forum so that she can review and score five closed complaints herself.

Housing Ombudsman News

The latest Housing Ombudsman news is always shared with the forum

A new further investigations process has been introduced to help landlords identify and address issues at an earlier stage, rather than waiting for a full investigation to take place. The process follows a tiered approach, requiring landlords to provide action plans and evidence of service improvements before matters escalate further. This is intended to encourage earlier problem-solving and strengthen accountability.

The Ombudsman has also published its latest report on severe maladministration, focusing on repairs. The report urges landlords to "see the person behind the

repair”, highlighting the real impact service failures can have on residents. It also provides insights and learning to support landlords in improving repair services and reducing future complaints.

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
22702	Disrepair Claim - damp and mould
22737	ASB – garden condition
22801	Unhappy with work carried out during an appointment
22870	Direct debit was incorrectly set up
22880	Cannabis use

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