

Meeting: Executive, April 26	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.

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

Positive feedback

Positive feedback was received from the Customer Complaints Forum, recognising the team's detailed response and thorough research into the issue. The forum highlighted that Selwood went above and beyond in its approach, demonstrating a strong commitment to understanding the customer experience and delivering a well-informed outcome. The exercise was also identified as a valuable learning opportunity, supporting continuous improvement across the service.

Development feedback

Development feedback from the Customer Complaints Forum highlighted the need for improved communication throughout the process. It was noted that the learning outcome did not clearly set out how the issue could have been prevented, indicating an opportunity to strengthen preventative analysis in future cases. In addition, the forum emphasised the importance of ensuring that work is completed right first time to reduce repeat visits and avoid escalation, supporting a more consistent and efficient customer experience.

In response to the forum's feedback,

In response to the Forum's feedback, work is being undertaken to look at the wider picture, including customer feedback as a whole. Learning outcomes play a significant role in this and will continue to inform service improvement. As the Complaints module within Dynamics is developed, greater emphasis will be placed on this area, with increased input and ownership expected from case managers to strengthen learning and drive consistent improvements.

We remain committed to supporting staff in delivering high-quality complaint responses and will continue to provide one-to-one support where required. The Complaints and Claims, Goodwill and Compensation policies are now mandatory annual reads, ensuring they are consistently reviewed by all relevant staff. This is particularly important for managers who may not regularly handle complaints, helping to ensure the guidance is understood, accessible, and applied consistently across the organisation.

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

The feedback has been shared with case managers and their managers to highlight areas of strong performance and identify where improvements can be made.

Summary of meeting

The meeting was held via Teams for the first time, as two members were unable to attend in person. While the meeting was successful, it was agreed that face-to-face meetings remain the preferred approach, as the forum benefits from strong relationships and more open discussion in person. Going forward, a hybrid approach will be adopted, allowing members the option to join remotely where needed.

Housing Ombudsman News

The latest Housing Ombudsman news is always shared with the forum

The sector continues to prioritise faster dispute resolution and earlier complaint handling, alongside stronger engagement with landlords on future fee changes. Housing Ombudsman Richard Blakeway will step down in July 2026, marking a leadership transition.

Updated national compensation guidance has been introduced and reflected within our policies. There is also increased regulatory focus on property hazards under HHSRS, particularly damp and mould, ventilation, excess cold and excess heat, aligned with Phase 1 of Awaab's Law from October 2025.

From October 2026, the Ombudsman is expected to oversee complaints relating to tenant information access under the new STAIRS framework, strengthening tenant rights and transparency across housing services.

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
22884	Flooring damaged when moving fridge during kitchen replacement
22988	Increase in energy bills due to issues with roof /damp and mould
23274	Compensation for hardwired lifeline services
23134	Longstanding issue with grounds maintenance on new build estate
23049	Operative did not ring doorbell and carded instead

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
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.