



Council Housing Service

Complaints Performance and Service

Improvement Plan from April 2024

Purpose

- To ensure that our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Conduct is complete and in line with the requirements
- To ensure that our Housing Complaints Policy is in line with the Housing Ombudsman's requirements
- To record a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaints handling performance
- To record a summary of the types of complaints we have refused to accept
- To show any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman
- To record the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
- To note actions following any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman
- To note our actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to our work

Reporting to Council Housing & Development Advisory Board (CHADAB):

This report will be reported to the CHADAB and be published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The CHADAB's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Note that we have the following in place:

- Housing Complaints Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Strategy & Policy (currently under review)
- Asset Management Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy (revised 2023)
- HRA (Housing Revenue Accounts) Business Plan
- Resident Involvement Strategy
- Risk register
- Tenancy Strategy and Policy (revised version to come into force from April 24)
- Service Improvement Plan

I. Complaints Received

Summary of the complaints received in 23/24 with comparisons (3-year trend) and any Housemark comparisons

Summary of Complaints received:	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Stage 1 received (No & %)	74 (15.52 per 1000 properties)	105 (21.92 per 1000 properties)	74 (15.42 per 1000 properties)
Stage 1 resolved (No & %)	62 of the 74 complaints (83.78%) resolved at Stage One Upheld = 27 Overturned = 47	83 of the 105 complaints (79.05%) resolved at Stage One Upheld = 67 Overturned = 38 October 2022 – Housing Ombudsman (HO) Reduced Response Times to 10 working days plus 10 days extension	65 of the 74 complaints (87.84%) resolved at Stage One Upheld = 55 (Partially Upheld = 12 of the 55) Overturned = 19
Stage 2 received (No & %)	12 (2.52% per 1000 properties)	22 (4.59% per 1000 properties)	9 (1.88% per 1000 properties)

Summary of Complaints received:	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Stage 2 resolved (No & %)	12 (100%) resolved at Stage Two Upheld = 4 Overturned = 8	22 (100%) resolved at Stage Two Upheld = 15 Overturned = 7	9 (100%) resolved at Stage Two Upheld = 6 (Partially Upheld = 2 of the 6) Overturned = 3

Number of Complaints Refused/Rejected	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Refused (Case numbers & reasons)	N/A	N/A 1 x Complaint was outside of the Housing Ombudsman remit	N/A 1 x Tenant withdrew complaint
Rejected (Case numbers & reasons)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Response Times (within HO required deadlines)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<p>Stage 1</p>	<p>Average days to respond – 12.61 days.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman timescales were 10 days at Stage One and 20 days at Stage Two, however our organisation had not adopted these timescales at this time.</p> <p>The timescales we operated under at this time were 15 days for Stage One and Two investigations.</p>	<p>Average days to respond</p> <p><u>Total for year</u> 13.80 days</p> <p><u>April – September (target 15 days)</u> 15.32 days</p> <p><u>October – March (target 10 days)</u> 12.42 days (this includes agreed extensions)</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman timescales were 10 days at Stage One and 20 days at Stage Two, until October 2022.</p> <p>Our organisation operated under our previous target of 15 days for Stage One and Two up until this time.</p>	<p>Average days to respond – 9.91 days. The Housing Ombudsman timescales are 10 days at Stage One and 20 days at Stage Two. Our timescales align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.</p>

Response Times (within HO required deadlines)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
		<p>Our timescales changed to align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code for the remaining time in this year (10 days for Stage One and 20 days for Stage Two).</p>	
<p>Stage 2</p>	<p>Average days to respond – 14.08 days.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman timescales were 10 days at Stage One and 20 days at Stage Two, however our organisation had not adopted these timescales at this time.</p> <p>The timescales we operated under at this time were 15 days</p>	<p>Average days to respond</p> <p><u>Total for year</u> 16.23 days</p> <p><u>April – September (target 15 days)</u> 13.78 days</p> <p><u>October – March (target 20 days)</u> 17.92 days</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman timescales were 10 days at Stage</p>	<p>Average days to respond – 14.44 days. The Housing Ombudsman timescales are 10 days at Stage One and 20 days at Stage Two. Our timescales align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.</p>

Response Times (within HO required deadlines)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	<p>for Stage One and Two investigations.</p>	<p>One and 20 days at Stage Two, until October 2022.</p> <p>Our organisation operated under our previous target of 15 days for Stage One and Two up until this time.</p> <p>Our timescales then changed to align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code for the remaining time in this year (10 days for Stage One and 20 days for Stage Two).</p>	

Housing Ombudsman Referrals & Outcomes	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Cases & Outcomes (note any maladministration)	Case: 202103088 – No maladministration	None	Case: 202214034 – Maladministration Case: 202213098 – No Maladministration

Non-Compliance with HO Code	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Note any areas where we do not comply with the code	N/A	N/A	N/A

Challenges

- I. Several different regulatory requirements being introduced at the same time

2. Complying with changes to the Housing Ombudsman Service: Complaints Handling Code
3. Internal budget restraints
4. Internal staff recruitment and retention
5. Increase of Housing Ombudsman Service membership costs
6. Reduction in complaint investigation timescales
7. Increased awareness of Complaints Process by the public, after Government and Housing Ombudsman Campaigns.

2.Learning from Complaints

What went wrong?	What action is required to address the cause of the problem to avoid this happening again	What evidence is available to confirm implementation of learning	Target date for completion	Lead and support
Case: 202213098	To provide an explanation of delays when emails are sent to someone who is absent from work.	Complaints Clinics for Managers to discuss and advise on out of offices.	Ongoing	All Depts
Case: 202214034	Exeter City Council (ECC) to advise the resident from the offset about our Decant Policy and what we are willing to offer in terms of alternative accommodation.	Staff aware and committed to delivering this.	Ongoing	RR, TS, LE, HC
	ECC to create a Decant Policy to work alongside our Decant Procedure.	We are in the process of creating a Decant Policy.	Ongoing	HC
	Review Staff and Contractor training needs in relation to Responsive Repairs timescales to ensure these are met in the future.	Responsive Repairs are updating their repairs procedures and timescales.		

What went wrong?	What action is required to address the cause of the problem to avoid this happening again	What evidence is available to confirm implementation of learning	Target date for completion	Lead and support
		<p>Contractors to align their timescales with those of ECC.</p> <p>Complaints Clinics for Managers to discuss complaint issues.</p> <p>Operational Management Team (OMT) Monitoring of ongoing issues.</p> <p>New Monthly Responsive Repairs Meetings to discuss complaints with the wider team.</p>		
	<p>To ensure any compensation offered is listed out separately, so that it is clear how much is being offered for each element.</p>	<p>Complaints Clinics for Managers to discuss complaint issues.</p> <p>New Monthly Responsive Repairs Meetings to discuss complaints with the wider team.</p> <p>Housing Complaint Response Guidance has been updated to include compensation breakdown requirements.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All Staff</p>
	<p>Ensure all procedure documents provided to the Housing Ombudsman are listed clearly.</p>	<p>Housing Complaint Handling Officers to ensure this is complied with.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	

What went wrong?	What action is required to address the cause of the problem to avoid this happening again	What evidence is available to confirm implementation of learning	Target date for completion	Lead and support
	All conversations and communications to be recorded by all ECC staff.	As we currently do not record calls, all communications are logged on our Housing Database.	Completed	

Housing Complaints Information

Our Housing Complaints Information can be found online, by clicking on the following links:

- [Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment form](#)
- [Housing Complaints Policy](#)
- [ECC Housing Complaints Website](#)

Housing Complaints also continually monitor complaints at:

- Operational Management Team Meetings
- Housing Complaints Clinics
- Housing Complaints Training and Workshops.

Key

- RR – Responsive Repairs & Voids
- PW – Planned Works
- TS – Tenancy Services
- LE – Lettings & Home Ownership
- CO – Compliance
- HD – Housing Development
- SC – Stock Condition
- EH – Environmental Health
- PGS – Parks & Green Spaces
- HC – Housing Complaints (Performance, Strategy & Resident Involvement)