**Complaints Task Force Meeting Minutes**

**26th October 2023**

**Attendees**

Housing Transformation Manager

Asset Team Manager

Customer Liaison Officer

Choice Based Lettings Team Manager

Babergh Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator

Neighbourhoods Team Manager

Tenant Board Member

1. **Housing Repairs Complaints Q2- Customer Liaison Officer**

Response Times​

* The average complaint response time in Q2 was 18.5 working days. This is up from an average of 16.9 working days in Q1.​
* We saw 60% of complaints responded to breach the 10-working day deadline, this is up from 45% in Q4.​

Themes & Trends​

* Tenants are continuing to make complaints about the lack of progress towards repair works, often demonstrating that they have contacted the Councils on multiple occasions to get a repair scheduled. The Councils are still seeing high levels of complaints for compliance related matters which is a hangover from the contract with Aarons Services. ​
* The Councils continue to receive complaints relating to damp and mould however, how this changes over winter and as Zap Carbon becomes more established remains to be seen. We are seeing complaints following Zap Carbon visits that work is not being carried out, could this be about the management of expectations with our tenants.​

There was a discussion around the process for Damp and Mould reporting, surveying and works.

Customer Liaison Officer summarised - “*When we send Zap Carbon (damp and mould Contractor) to do the survey and clean and treat the mould. They try to identify what is causing the damp or mould. They then send a report back to the Building Services Team which includes multiple recommendations (e.g inadequate ventilation or leaky room). However, we are unsure how long that takes. Some repairs are scheduled in and then get added to the “pile”. We have procured a contractor to do a large number of older repairs so we can focus in house on all the new repairs that are coming in.”*

A conversation took place around communication in relation to Damp and Mould. It was suggested that the long wait times to resolve repairs are not effectively communicated by us or the contractors. In terms of Damp and Mould we are quick to get a surveyor to the property but the follow up work can take a long time.

**ACTION: Come back to the group with data around average zap carbon times and how we are keeping tenants in the loop around their damp and mould case.**

1. **Tenancy Services + Housing Solutions complaints Q2- Customer Liaison Officer**

Response Times ​

* The average complaint response time in Q4 was 7.1 working days for Tenancy Services and 7.1 working days for Housing Solutions. ​

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* Neither Housing Solutions or Tenancy Management had any complaints breach the 10-day deadline that were responded to in Q2.​

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Themes & Trends​

Tenancy Services saw complaints raised regarding the following:​

* Neighbour Disputes​
* Anti-Social Behaviour​
* Parking​
* ​

1 of the 14 complaints were upheld.​

Housing Solutions saw complaints regarding:​

* Social Housing Applications​
* Appeals to Gateway to Homechoice Banding​
* ​

Only 1 of the 11 complaints received was partially upheld.

1. **Stage Two Complaints & Housing Ombudsman Cases- Customer Liaison Officer**

Stage Two​

Between 1st July and the 30th September 2023 the Councils’ received 14 stage two complaints regarding Housing Repairs, Asset Management and Asset Compliance. This is up 7 from 13 in Q2 last year. ​

Themes for this quarter include:​

* Tenants following up repairs reported and why they had not been scheduled​
* Escalation of complaints where no repairs had been undertaken that were detailed in stage one responses​
* Lack of communication regarding repairs​

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Housing Solutions received 2 stage two complaints and Tenancy Services received 3. Between the 5 complaints received, one was upheld.​

Ombudsman Cases​

* The Councils have not had any Housing Ombudsman determinations or requests for evidence in this quarter. ​
* The Councils are still waiting on the outcomes of three investigations by the Ombudsman

There was another conversation round communication but specifically around Gas and Electric works. It was found that the previous contractor did not communicate effectively with the tenants and this has led to complaints. There are actions in place to learn from the previous contractor’s lack of communication and ensure the new Gas and Electric contractors are communicating with tenants.

**ACTION: Find out and get back to group about how previous contractor communicated with tenants and where the problems were**

**ACTION: Discover if the new contractors do communicate to the tenants and what their process is?**

1. **Housing Ombudsman news- Housing Transformation Manager**
* Islington Council ordered to pay £66k to residents​
* Poor record keeping and ‘consistent failure to communicate’​
* Islington Council was found to have a “disjointed” approach to complaints and “lack of clear ownership” that was leading to problems “drifting and persisting”.​
* Among the cases was a disabled resident unable to use their ground-floor wet room for months due to a lack of repairs. Another resident’s complaint was found to be stuck in the landlord’s system for three years.​
* The watchdog found teams that “appear to work in silos, rather than effectively with each other”, While “tension between objectives has caused inertia, with no overall ‘owner’ to make decisions”. Residents may be “pushed between teams and misdirected, with no one taking ownership or managing progress toward a resolution”.​
* “poor record-keeping across the board is hampering an efficient and effective response”,

Islington Council are now doing the following:

* Set up a Housing Improvement Board to raise standards and respond to new regulatory requirements. We will build on this and deliver the ombudsman’s recommendations through an expanded improvement plan.​
* A new, place-based approach to housing management” so residents have a single point of contact and “staff take ownership of their patch”.​
* There will be additional training for all repairs staff on customer service and learning from mistakes, trialling new approaches for damp and mould cases such as remote monitoring sensors, and a review of ASB services.​
1. **Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Q1 and Q2- Housing Transformation Manager**

Babergh Tenant Satisfaction Measures :

* **41.17** Stage 1Complaints received per 1,000 homes.
* **18.75%** Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days.
* **6.29** Stage 2 Complaints received per 1,000 homes.
* **23.52%** Stage 2 Complaints responded to within 20 working days.
* **24%** Satisfaction with Complaints Handling

Mid Suffolk Tenant Satisfaction Measures

* **37.60** Stage 1Complaints received per 1,000 homes.
* **23.20%** Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days.
* **5.71** Stage 2 Complaints received per 1,000 homes.
* **30.76%** Stage 2 Complaints responded to within 20 working days.
* **30%** Satisfaction with Complaints Handling

This information has been sent to HouseMark to compare with approximately 180 landlords who have also submitted their results.

The **Babergh Portfolio Holder for Housing** stated that tenants have reported a complaint and then found out that this was never logged on the system.

**Customer Liaison Officer** stated *“Myself and the Tenant Engagement Team are completing some investigative work to understand why complaints are not being logged on the system. We have found lack of complaint reporting at verbal communication stage. A survey will be issued to tenants who said they have logged a complaint through the TSM’s but are not on the system. The results of this survey and its actions will be presented at the next meeting.”*

1. **Preventative Actions:**

**The Housing Transformation Manager** asked if anyone had any updates for the group about preventative actions or learning.

**Babergh Portfolio Holder for Housing** asked if there will be any work being done to try and be more proactive instead of reactive when dealing with repairs and understanding the condition of properties.

**Housing Transformation Manager-**  “*The future aspiration is to carry out MOT reviews of our properties so we can be proactively finding the issues. There are lots of moving parts which is why there is a problem. It is not going to be a quick thing. We have got the a backlog which we are now passing over to a new contract. We are also planning to complete stock condition surveys on 50% of stock within 12 months and 100% of stock of 24 months.”*

Asset Team Manager confirmed we are planning on completing stock condition surveys on approximately 3,500 homes (50%) and we will be starting in January.

1. **Up Next**
* CRM System being introduced for all of housing in January 2024​
* Introduction of Nigel Fox – Resolutions Coordinator​
* Ombudsman Session with Suffolk authorities​
* Getting through the backlog​ of complaints

Customer Liaison Officer also confirmed that there will soon be a Joint complaint handling code Between LGA and Housing Ombudsman, we already have a code in place as we have already been working with the Housing Ombudsman. Finally, we have our first stand up for the new complaints system, Place Cube is leading on the project. Testing will take place between now and the end of the year.

-------------END OF MEETING-------------