

Complaints Taskforce Meeting

7th January 2025

Attendees: David White – Housing Transformation Manager
James Hart – Customer Liaison Officer
Rosi Howlett – Neighbourhoods Team Manager
Roan Morling – Housing and Engagement Team Manager
Kerry Lecomber – Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Nicola Anderson – Building Services Admin Team Manager
Cllr Ruth Hendry
Karen Carter – CBL Team Manager
Liz Perryman – Tenant Board Member
Deborah Fenton – Director of Housing
Rob Longfoot – Head of Housing Management
Polly Bearman – Income Manager
Keeley Whitlock – Customer Resolutions Officer
Alison Wade – Business Services Manager, Housing

David opened the meeting and advised that this should be a very positive meeting with quarter three figures to share with the group. He advised he was pleasantly surprised by direction.

James shared a presentation on the quarter three complaints data, one of the actions from last meeting from LP was for some compliment information which we have.

Action: Include compliments and positive stories – will keep that on the agenda going forwards.

Action: Come back with performance information on Zap Carbon on Damp and Mould.

Average time from reporting to visit is 8 days for Babergh and 9 for Mid Suffolk. Once they've attended and inspected, they clean and shield and report back to us within 10 days with recommendations and works are raised through contractor. Most currently going to Aran insulation. Trying to improve communication with tenants on that.

Action: Gas and Electric contractor – issues around those service areas.

New repairs contractor will call tenant to arrange access unless it's an emergency. For planned works a recorded letter is sent out up to 1 month to 2 weeks prior. Phone call, reminder text and will email if we have details. Email and calling card and sticker front door with QR code.

We also now have a dashboard for complaints. DF enquired as to timescale for developing that and requested that **managers are briefed on how to use that to manage.**

Complaints Quarter Three

- Repairs and Maintenance – now a three-year comparison. Stage one complaints now dropped hugely from 129 Q3 last year to 55 to Q3 this year. Upheld 37 or those, 8 not upheld and 5 not considered a complaint. Average working days to acknowledge and respond now both within time.
- Assets and compliance dropped from 25 last year to 2 last year then up to 8. Last year complaints allocated incorrectly so it's more a movement from 25 to 8. Acknowledged within time but responding times are over.
- Compliance went from 50 to 64 and now down to 48. In terms of outcomes some are blank as not completed on the system. Requested Amanda get her team to complete before it's put on website.
- Tenancy Services from 9 to 21 and 22 this year. A lot of non-complaints through this – things such as ASB and Gateway appeals. Upheld 5 this year. Again, need to double check outcomes are completed.
- Housing Solutions 4 to 6 to 12 but 8 of those not considered a complaint. Not all HS complaints are landlord issues.
- Stage 2. 12 to 29 to 24. The big drop in stage 1 should have a knock on effect going forwards. Eleven have been upheld. Ave respond 14 days which is in time.

Themes are delays to repairs and communication. Lesson to learn is better management of contractors and we need evidence of that. **Amanda will take that back to Adam.**

Still some misunderstanding about the fencing policy. Anything with an open boundary gets a fence. Have seen evidence of contractors referring it to it as a 'no fencing policy' – **that needs to be picked up with the fencing contractor**. LP advised it's not the Council that are missing communication it's the contractors not holding up their end and contacting people. **Action: Ensure Contract Managers pick up with their contractors.** LP enquired about fencing policy and NA advised we are responsible to keep secure from outside world but not between homes.

Biggest compensation of stage 2 was failing to repair two storage heaters and ended up paying £2,200 in compensation. RH enquired as to details which JH provided.

DW advised that looking at the system it's clear it's not everyone is completing it correctly so the dashboard isn't right yet. Also 31st March is cut off so need to bear that timeframe in mind in the run up to that so all the administration must be done before we give our return to the Ombudsman.

JH also reminded managers that investigations must be as impartial as possible so don't use contractor responses word for word. We have a Repairs and Maintenance policy that must be referred to in responses and should help with guidance on timeframes.

Two determinations in Q3 both of which were upheld, first £1,000 compensation and second found at fault and given 4 weeks to go back to HO to prove we're following their advice creating a schedule of works and pay £700 compensation. Will now be providing internal report on these determinations and it'll be presented as part of this meeting and with relevant teams.

Housing Ombudsman

DW advised OH report focussed on ASB which is second highest driver to HO. Five themes of failings; action plans, risk assessments, working with other agencies, hate crime and communication. DW will provide these slides to all.

LP enquired if Tenant Board can see this report. **Action: DW will send the link.**

Compliments

JH took the meeting through some of the positive comments that have come in from tenants regarding repairs, adaptations and homelessness support.

43% year on year reduction in complaints.

TSMs improvement in handling with complaints.

KW took team through compliment back direct from tenant and also some from contractors who have passed them back.

Lessons learned and preventative actions during Q3

Team broke into two groups.

1. Improvement to CRM callback requests and aim to deal with all within 48 hours and that's working. Team much better at managing it. Removed some email boxes and managed through CRM – lesson learnt.
2. Follow-on works now get moved forwards more quickly via batphone.
3. Gone into CAP and joined team meetings and given feedback on using CRM and dealing with complaints coming in. Ensuring first point of contact can resolve as much as possible. Working more closely with them going forwards.
4. New job management system should improve communication so the tenants can communicate with us digitally.
5. RM looked through his complaints and picked up communication so he will be reviewing the ASB procedure to include timeframes. Having more resource on the ground to communicate and changes should resolve this. In terms of sign-ups being clearer about tenants' responsibilities.
6. Tenant Handbook being launched should also aid communication and clarity hugely.
7. PB advised that complaints for income tended to be as a result of contact from the rent officer and highlighted some particular needs and enabled us to have more ad hoc conversations and support in place. Has enabled us to improve approach to individuals. Three cases of that type.
8. DW advised improvement day on complaints and next one is on vulnerabilities before end of Financial Year. Hope to have external support to do some training on recording, adapting etc.

Next steps

Joined Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign, one of their Pioneer Travellers (one of ten across the country). Have had a session which produced an action plan and a review set in a couple of weeks to prioritise.

Will be carrying out complaints Scrutiny and then ASB Scrutiny with Tenant Board.

Next meeting to be set for end April – KL.