

Resident Complaint Panel Minutes

4, November 2025 via Teams 2:00PM

Housing 21 - Vanessa Pritchard-Wilkes (VPW), Maddie Kelly-Morrow (MKM), Sarah Bliss (SB), Shelley Nicholson (SN) Minutes, Amber Crick (AC), Jessica Thorley (JT)

Present: Six Residents

Apologies: One Resident

		Action
1.	VPW – Welcome and Introductions offered but declined as group know one another.	N/A
2.	Actions from previous meeting. - Look into guidance on court-based heating systems, issued as standard on moving in. SB - IT is not as straightforward as hoped but we have made some progress on looking into this. We have looked at what goes into a court service agreement. VPW: Overheating will come under Awaab's Law in October 2026 so we will be doing some work around that, linking in with complaints, to ensure we are prepared for it. - Ageism training for employees. MKM - We are working closely with a colleague in the Learning and Development team around this. We have been reviewing the existing Respect and Inclusion Charter and training and the extent that ageism is mentioned in this. We are looking at whether it stays in this training or if we draw it out to stand alone. Any feedback from this panel would be welcome on where you think ageism comes in. It is high on our agenda. RD: I have raised this; I think it was me last time and with Bruce mainly around appropriate language choices. There seems to be some age fixated advice to residents, which I have seen. - Outcome on previous reviewed case with the Housing Ombudsman MKM - We are still awaiting this and will be for some time I feel. VPW - Any more business from last meeting: None	Complaints Team – to continue with points raised.
3.	Landlord Report – Housing Ombudsman	VPW and Complaints

	VPW – This is an annual report given to any landlord with over five determinations in the year. We received seven determinations. 14 findings and three cases of Maladministration. The report also shows the previous years performance. 2022/23 was good with no maladministration's, then an increase in 2023/24. We have then dropped considerably in 2024/25, which is part of the reason the Housing Ombudsman has invited us to do a joint webinar with them. ID – It's quite a misleading report, as there are a low number of cases, any percentages are meaningless. I didn't understand what it was getting at. The numbers are low otherwise I am unsure what we get from it. VPW – We will be taking part in a joint webinar with them in February next year, which they have requested, and we have accepted as it is a good opportunity for us. We are working on what will be included and will come back with our ideas on it, for your feedback. RD – I recently went to a Housing Ombudsman event and it was interesting how lucky we are to have a small number of complaints in the first place. It seemed other housing associations had some problems with vexatious complainants, who would push everything the Housing Ombudsman, as they felt they would get some compensation. VPW – We want to ensure there are no barriers for complainants which moves us onto our next agenda item, our Complaint Improvement Project which Jess will introduce.	Team – Feedback to Panel on content for webinar for feedback.
4.	Complaint Improvement Project with Jessica Thorley JT - Jess introduced herself and how she is working closely with Maddie and Sarah on our Complaints Improvement Project. We have made a good start and have an overview of what we want to achieve in this project, how we want to approach this and I'll go into this and we welcome any suggestions from residents to guide this. 1- Getting the resident experience right. Tackle a fear of complaining and ensuring the residents feel safe, confident and supported to complain. That their complaints will be handled fairly and not used against them. We will look at any barriers to complaints, such as language barriers, confidence, literacy issues and if there is a pocket of residents we are not hearing from and why. We want to get that right.	Complaints Team and JT to share Complaint Action Plan with Panel members.

	2- Colleagues feel supported. This is important so they feel supported and can give a consistent experience. That they have the right training and support on hand if needed at stage one and stage two. That they have the resources they need. That employees feel equipped to support residents to complain and how to handle more vexatious complainants. 3- Embedding Learning. How we can strengthen this and share lessons across the business. Both in retirement living and extra care, sharing good practice across both in order to build on it and continuously improve. 4- Lastly, to become a lead for good practice for complaints. We want to build on lessons from other organisations. JT - We want to tie all four elements together. The customer journey and colleague experience will often run in parallel together but not always. If these parts are not in place this results in a poor service for residents. We want to pick apart the root causes of this. ID – This has been spoken about in a lot of forums, the workload on local managers and the argument that complaints move out to an independent body. Therefore, someone independent is looking at it straight away, removing the personality at the beginning. It would remove the Manager from the equation. I don't know whether it works. But it could give the staff and residents more confidence in it. JT – This comes up sometimes in best practice groups and there are pros and cons to this. Factoring in, what is best for our scenario. Maddie and Sarah have experience to draw from with from previous experience of complaints. We would also like to see what residents think about this. MKM – From networking with other organisations, so see what is working for them and what is not. We can hear if a centralised team or an operational team works. We are hosting a meeting of around 20 different housing associations, around 30 attendees next week. Co-authors of the Housing Ombudsman code will also be joining the meeting which is great. We have lots of experience in house but it's good to reach out. We can update the panel after the meeting. RD- I agree with ID. I came to the same conclusion independently. I know of neighbours who won't complain and why. This is due to systematic reasons and it can be that one court is dominated by one personality. What is a complaint, can cause confusion in some,	Complaints Team to update the panel after the meeting with Housing Associations.
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	due to safeguarding, anti-social behaviour. There is a need for clarity. JT – There is a cross over, the HOS give their definition of a complaint but that is not always clear in practice. We can look at the language that we use. How can we simplify this as much as possible so that staff feel supported to make the decision between complaint, ASB etc. It is a murky/grey area and can differ from one ombudsman to another. JY – Be as simple as possible. The idea of a separate department, it might be difficult to hit timescales with this if it was a central team. Just my thoughts I don't have answers for this. JT – Yes there is no clear answer and all 20 organisations coming together might be all doing it differently. That's why we need good practice groups, what is working and why. There are as said pros and cons to a devolved model and to a centralised team. MKM – For a centralised team this requires a well-informed team, who have knowledge on both housing and care issues, enough to make judgements on them. We would have to buy into Local Housing Managers supporting investigations and providing information needed. This is cultural change for an organisation I feel, and we could struggle to get the information needed. Teams in my experience can be grateful that they are not burdened with writing of the responses. SB – Yes, I agree, both structures have pros and cons. DL – I am agreeing with ID, moving one step back from the Local Manager will get us away from a "he said, she said" situation. We risk residents or groups of wanting to attack the court manager with a complaint, so it is a double-edged sword. Residents may be worried of complaining and the Managers worried about being complained about. JT – I think it's important we don't make assumptions either side. We are unique here, in that in my previous organisation there wasn't someone on site to call. There was no human part in existence. So, the devolved model can work well and offer a fantastic service when it works. It can go wrong when a personality doesn't work. TL: We always seem to be comparing ourselves to other housing associations and we should look at complaint handling in a wider way. Take Amazon for example, they looked at where they were	
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	failing in that industry. What is best practice rather than comparing to that sector. Amazon wouldn't exist today the way it is. We have a customer and a supplier, end of story. We will never achieve the ultimate goal of excellent complaint handling and customer service if we don't look outside the sector. JT – That is a really good point. It is the start of what we have looked at, but we can try not to stick to that. I have looked into the NHS for example and what they are doing with regard to the patient experience. I have looked at private rented and estate agencies to see what they are doing. It's a good reminder as a team not to focus on one sector. ID – To back up what TL said, supermarkets set up team of experts to go in when opening new branches. Housing 21 could do similar when setting up new schemes. We should look at broader services and systems. VPW – This has been a very useful conversation and the first time in many years. 6-8 months ago we have two people in complaints. Now we have more resource, and we are meeting with other leading providers as we have had more time and resource to do that and its great. RD – Is it possible to have a copy of the action plan when it's in place. VPW – Yes, we are happy to share and have feedback on.	
5.	Complaint scrutiny Review 1 MKM – This was an Extra Care Complaint from a resident who had dementia and a bed bug infestation. Family members were very proactive in acting to stop the spread, but they were unhappy with the input from Housing 21. It led to a healthy compensation amount of £3,000. We would be interested in your thoughts and what you felt was fair and what didn't? ID – Concern that bed bugs can be a nasty thing and spread easily. Was there a wider implication for other residents? I had wondered if pest control should have kicked in earlier and for communal areas. MKM – With this case we were alerted over a weekend, so feel we acted as fast as we could have done. Pest control was called straight out, and we used two separate pest control companies for advice and support.	Complaints Team - New draft letter templates to be recirculated to the panel members.

	This complaint was one of two raised as the infestation reoccurred. It turned out that there had been previous infestations many months previous, therefore challenging. We tried to be fair and reasonable and looked at other Housing Ombudsman cases concerning bed bugs to inform our approach. RD – Issue with it, is the pest control policy at the beginning I could see and by the end, I couldn't. The policy seemed wrong on the premise and that usually resident have responsibility for these things, and it amazed me that we were willing to sort this out. MKM – On a personal note, I feel a review of the policy is needed. Bedbugs have implications for employees and the whole building. DL – Previous infestations we were unaware of. It read like the policy was ripped up and thrown away. Communal washers are a vector for potentially spreading them. I had a relook at policy and following current policy it is residents' responsibility to do all of that. MKM – This complaint came from an acquired court, therefore we had very little information regarding previous infestations, so it was tough to manage and bed bug cases can be very emotional. Did it come across as just trying to appease? DL – Roll over and play dead to me. RD – Listened to HOS if this had got to them, I feel we would have faired badly. There is a downer on people who act against policy. MKM – Could I ask one more question on how you feel about the term held/not upheld. Does this feel the right words/tone? RD – I struggle with chunks of dense text, and then some upheld, some partially upheld, it is a lot to take in, which bits refer to which. I scored this one highly but it was difficult to read. ID – I feel it was contradictory. I prefer a straightforward agree or disagree approach. Overly complex descriptions for me it demonstrated something missing. The whole thing was contradictory and a complex one. MKM – Reading on the stage one response, we kept the complainants, 'I think this, I think that' it should have perhaps been changed to third person. ID – This comes back to consistency from day one, if we had a centralised team.	
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	DL – I realised I was reading in one big hit weeks of communications. I split it into chunks, and it became less complex. Before that my mind was blown. I think it was a reasonable response and the upheld/not upheld I think are clear terms. MKM – To me I’m more natural with ‘agree or disagree’ but we welcome residents feedback on this and if you feel it is ok. RD – When the persons representative got involved, the language changed, and you could tell this is someone who could take us to the cleaners. Having one team would help with this. MKM – If you would like less information for the next time, please feedback to us and we can do this. Review 2 SB – To discuss complaint two which is from Retirement Living. It was mainly about repairs, and interactions which were labelled as aggressive, therefore feeling dismissed. Could we take your thoughts on this one? RD – I feel getting basic facts wrong on how long it took to fix is bad. There are many ways to tell someone they are rude and aggressive without saying those words. I gave this a high score as the stage two I felt fixed a lot of the problems. Stage one I would give a lot lower of a score. Using an overheard conversation from a colleague as evidence is bad too. DL – One thing I took out of this, is the need to say these conversations will be recorded, for training purposes etc. If it was recorded it gets rid of the he said/she said. I know both parties would need to agree to it. I always put a complaint or a service request in writing. Was it a shower pump or the drain which was the issue? SB – I think it was both. It was one issue that became multiple issues. It led to discovery of a problem with the shower trap but it was also the pump. I can’t say why we don’t record conversations; I can only assume it would have data protection implications. VPW – We do have listening devices, but these are fairly new and not everyone has one yet or the training. They are meant more for emergency situations. ID – If it isn’t written down it didn’t happen is what I say. It struck me as a ‘he said, she said’ case. It needed documenting, recording	
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	and that taken out of it straight away. I cant therefore put hand on heart and say who was in the wrong or in the right. SB – I will ask the question. To me, from the two responses, the language used is very different. Information within them, was not accurate at stage one to time taken. A lesson to learn from this is the investigation at stage one is fundamental, we have discussed this with regards to the process. We can quality check so they can be as robust as possible and avoid escalations. I feel if the stage one was responded the way the stage two was, we could have avoided a stage two. MKM - We have new letter templates, which we have received some email feedback on, but can I ask how you found them? [Discussion around recirculating of the letter templates please] ID – I think whatever you chose to use in the letters, upheld, not upheld as long as this is kept consistent. RD- I have a general question, do the people responding have a checklist to follow before sending? SB- Yes, we have an investigation form template, but it is a bit chunky and unclear, so this is on the agenda for us as part of the service improvement plan. Thank you. VPW – If the group is happy to keep looking at complaint responses it gives knowledge and shows the challenges around responding to complaints that we have.	
6.	AOB • Discussion around date of next meeting. Suggestion for around 6-8 weekly. That keeping it fresh in the mind makes for more productivity and momentum. Agreed on mid-January 2026, therefore group can hear details of the Housing Association meeting and the upcoming Housing Ombudsman Webinar. TL - It is good to see this interaction as a resident. Continuity concentrates the mind, and regularity is the key to quality. ID – I like the reviewing a couple of cases before the meeting.	VPW and Complaints Team - Set new meeting date. Complaints team - Complaints panel wish to review more, ahead of the meetings
7.	VPW – Closed meeting 15:30. Thank you all for contributions.	