**Housing 21’s Resident Complaint Panel Minutes**

13 August 2025 via Teams 11:00AM

**Attendees**

Housing 21 representatives: Vanessa Pritchard-Wilkes (VPW), Maddie Kelly-Morrow (MKM), Sarah Bliss (SB), Shelley Nicholson (SN), Sam Pritchard (SP), Lucy Nixon (LN), Ally Dewar (AD), Jessica Thorley (JT)

Present: Five residents

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|  | **Agenda items** | **Action** |
| 1. | **Vanessa Pritchard-Wilkes - Introductions and welcome**  Recent restructure and recruitment and new employees to introduce to the panel. |  |
| 2. | **Introductions to new employees and resident panel members.**  Maddie Kelly-Morrow – Complaints lead for Extra Care.  Sarah Bliss – Complaints lead for Retirement Living.  Shelley Nicholson – Complaints Coordinator Retirement Living.  Jessica Thorley – Complaints and Consultation Business Partner.  Resident Introductions  Sam Pritchard – Projects and Change Officer – introduction.  Lucy Nixon – Resident Communication Manager – introduction.  Ally Dewar – Head of Extra Care in the North region. |  |
| 3. | **Ally Dewar – Discuss appealed and determined Housing Ombudsman Case**   * Complaint brought to us 2022 regarding rising energy costs. * Questions raised on how Housing 21 sets its rents, energy costs and how we manage temperatures within apartments. * In February 2023 this progressed to a formal stage one complaint. * The complaint was raised from the Power of Attorney of the resident, rather than the resident themselves. Detailed information was requested. * POA unhappy they were not invited to the consultation meeting regarding the energy rises and felt the term ‘consultation’ was misleading as the charges could not be consulted on. * Offer of an apology at stage one and offer of compensation £200. * This was declined and complaint escalated to stage two as the complainant felt a decent explanation was not given. * Complaint went to Housing Ombudsman who did not accept the case in the first instance, stating a tier one tribunal would be more appropriate. This was appealed until the Housing ombudsman accepted it as a case. * The ombudsman acknowledged that Housing 21 had apologised, that we had checked the room temperatures and supported the resident. * They found maladministration in our complaints process and service failures in our managing of the heating. The issue was raised 14 times before being logged as a formal complaint. * Housing 21 requested a review from the Housing Ombudsman as we had evidence, the heating system was inspected by engineers, that we had monitored the temperatures regularly and that by Housing standards the maximum temperature a home must not exceed regularly is 26 degrees – not the 21 degrees that we had let the apartment go over. * Findings from the review – the Housing Ombudsman reduced the time they said we were outside of our complaints process, however still maladministration in our complaint handling. They determined that even if someone does not say they want a formal complaint, if they are dissatisfied, we should still put this through our process and explain this clearly to them why. * We processed hints and tips for residents on energy use, even though the Housing Ombudsman did not order it, as good practice. * Government guidance on a ‘cold’ room was clarified as it did not apply directly to our settings. The court in the complaint did happen to have a room suitable for this. * The Housing Ombudsman ordered us to apologise again as they felt our original apology could have been seen as insincere. Ally Dewar personally met with the complainant and offered this apology in person.   The panel reflected that this is an interesting case and questioned what the relationship is like now with the resident? What are our lessons learned?  The in-person meeting ended on good terms, with the POA and resident happy to draw a line under it now. It is a closed complaint however, we will continue to react and work with them, if anything changes in the future.  Some of the lessons learned we already started to put in place before the full case determination came in. This was around our complaints processes and how we manage the timings of stage one and stage two complaints. We have learned from this that we should not delay the timings should the complainant be on holiday.  AD stated that he believed that a lot of complaints can be put right at the very beginning.  One thing that stood out, when reviewing this, was how transparent the local team were. They even got access to restricted papers from the board and Bruce Moore, to share with the resident, to be transparent in how we do things.  A resident reflected that temperature is so subjective. Their flat was currently 27.4 degrees with the curtains shut and the air con off. It very rarely goes lower. What is cold for one resident maybe hot for others and vice versa.    There are guidelines and parameters we can try and meet; however, we need to consider the point of view of the resident. The interpretation of the POA was not in this case the same as the resident. The resident was happy with the temperature, this produced confusion. It was reiterated that we followed Housing 21’s processes, which is why we requested the review. We learned at the point if information is given and they come back as not satisfied, we should log this as a formal stage one complaint.  A further lesson learnt would be to look at developing guidelines for residents at these courts, so they know when coming in, that you cannot guarantee each room is exactly the same temperature.  In this case the resident did know about the heating system, but the rise in cost prompted the complaint.  This is interesting learning around when a resident does not want to make a complaint.  There is a project around the complaints process coming, including improved logging of service requests. The project will feed back into the group. | **Complaints Team** - Look into guidance on court-based heating systems, issued as standard on moving in.  **Complaints project group** - to feed back into panel regularly. |
| 4. | **Sam Pritchard - Discuss and review on-going Housing Ombudsman complaint**   * Case currently with the ombudsman and anonymised for review. * We are interested in the panels views on how it was handled, tone of response, clarity and stance. New score card was provided by Maddie Kelly-Morrow to pilot, to rate complaint handling. * Complaint also centres around a heating complaint. The residents have no control other than radiator valves on individual radiators. A timeline was provided to make it easier to understand.   Several of the panel completed the scorecard and provided positive feedback.  Additional comments related to the technical data which was felt hard to understand.  Residents discussed the technical data and the extent to which people could be expected to understand it. Suggestions were made around the data being supplemented by a face-to-face meeting to ensure understanding.  There should also be consideration of any additional needs.  There was also a discussion around the recording of conversations to ensure there were notes for reference, with the resident’s permission. It was felt that this would be helpful for on-going complaints.  Did you enjoy reviewing this case?  The panel stated that it was interesting, and they would appreciate knowing the outcome. The panel expressed an interest in being involved in the review of complaints using the scorecard. | **Complaint team** - Complaint Score card to be an excel document, going forward.  **Residents Panel** **Members** –those who wish to share completed score cards with us, to email.  **Complaints team** – Discuss/ Consider ageism training for employees.  **Complaint Leads** – Update panel on outcome of complaint. |
| 5. | **AOB**  There was a discussion around whether customer service skills should be improved.This will be revisited at a future meeting.  The panel agreed that we should not be shying away from dissatisfaction or hiding from it.  There was a concern that some residents may be wary of making a complaint and this is something which the proposed complaints improvement project needs to address. |  |
| 6. | VPW closed the meeting and thanked everyone for taking part.  A very big thank you to Sam Pritchard for her hard work with the complaints panel.  We meet quarterly therefore I will look at some dates for the year and send across. | VPW and Complaints Team - Set dates for the next meeting and share. |

Meeting closed at 12:28pm