**Compliments and Complaints Update**

**Performance update: January 2025- March 2025 Quarter 4 and Year End**

We received 63 complaints this period (Retirement Living 28, Extra Care 33 and Property Sales 2). This compared to 43 for the same period in the previous financial year (Retirement Living 21, Extra Care 21 and Property Sales 1).

From April, the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code meant all social housing landlords’ complaints procedures changed. This means there is no longer an informal complaint category and so we have seen an increase in the number of complaints logged.

In the year (April 2024-March 2025) we have received a total of 297 stage one complaints and 53 stage two escalations by the complainant. However, five of the 53 were escalations from stage one complaints logged in the 23-24 financial year. So for 2024-25 there were 48 stage two escalations or 16%.

We have made improvements to our recording system so that our local managers can help to resolve concerns as a service request where the complainant is happy to do so.

**The Housing Ombudsman Code says:**A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly. A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.

The service request can help to ensure that we can resolve as many concerns locally and as quickly as possible.

**Our complaints performance**

Our performance for the year 2024-25 against the response targets which are set within the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code are as follows:

* Acknowledgement of stage one formal complaints within five working days
	+ **We achieved 97 percent** (eight outside timescale)
* Response to stage one formal complaints within 10 working days
	+ **We achieved 94 percent** (18 outside timescale and three still in progress)
* Response to stage two formal complaints within 20 working days
	+ **We achieved 98 percent** (one outside target)

Examples of the areas of complaint within ‘Other’ category include: failure of service, to communicate or to consult; external agencies; fairness and respect; resident engagement; damage to property, and health and safety.

**Learning from formal complaints**

Complaints are important to us, because if we get something wrong there may be changes, we need to make to improve our services. We call these ‘lessons learnt.’

Learning from complaints is mainly related to local learning at schemes. A common theme no matter what the subject of the complaint is a failure to follow policy and procedure, mainly around complaints and anti-social behaviour (ASB) handling which we are working to improve.

Here are some examples of the organisation-wide learning we have implemented or are in the process of reviewing:

* The need to be careful with our language and not refer to ASB issues or concerns as complaints, this has been picked up by the Ombudsman. We will be issuing further guidance on this to help with clarification.
* New Unreasonable Behaviour Policy as a result of a HOS recommendation.
* Develop a new Pest Control Policy.
* More training and support on ASB required nationally following the current policy review and Housing Ombudsman determinations.
* Review systems to improve our record keeping.
* Policy to be updated when entering properties and conduct within it.
* Safeguarding Policy to include referral to the Office of the Public Guardian alongside the Social Services Department if someone with a Power of Attorney is involved.
* Introduction of alternative contact methods for prospective purchasers of new development properties e.g. Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp.
* A new ‘Damp and Mould Policy’ as a result of the HOS Spotlight Report is in place.
* New focus on pest infestations to ensure we are able to monitor within the subject areas for complaints.
* Updated signposting on what to do following receipt of a complaint about an employee, following an HOS recommendation.
* Updates to Former Arrears processes: Our Income Recovery team to chase former arrears in a timelier manner and updated our end of tenancy process for that Local Housing Managers.

Further details about our Complaints Policy and Procedure can be found via our website at:

[Housing 21 complaints Web Page](https://www.housing21.org.uk/resident-information/get-involved-engagement-and-feedback/feedback-and-complaints/complaints/)

**Compliments**

We always welcome and value compliments about our employees and services. We have received a total of 1,067 compliments during 2024-25 and 79 percent were about employees/teams, 18 percent about services, and three percent about our contractors.

**Housing Ombudsman Update**
The Housing Ombudsman looks at complaints from residents from different types of housing providers if residents remain unhappy with the response from their landlord. Its work is funded by annual landlord subscription fees. Investigating these complaints is a free, independent, and impartial service for residents about their housing related complaints.

In the year we received 14 enquiries and 11 cases.

* ​Extra Care – 3 enquiries and 4 cases.​
* Retirement Living – 11 enquiries and 7 cases. ​

An enquiry is usually a check from Housing Ombudsman as to whether the complaint process has been completed internally or not, or whether it’s within their jurisdiction. ​If a complaint has not been through the two-stage process, they may ask us to start the process on behalf of the complainant. Once completed the Housing Ombudsman may then raise a case to investigate the complaint.​

Case requests can take many months for the Housing Ombudsman to process, and so determinations can often relate to a previous financial year. Our target is zero at fault cases.

Three of the determinations received this year related to complaints handled in 2023-24 period – all were found as no maladministration or resolved by reasonable redress.

Of the cases received and submitted this year we have received five determinations. Two of which had some element of fault. In both cases there was maladministration relating to complaint handling and in one a service failure into handling of heating and property temperature concerns.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at any point during the complaints process for advice and guidance using the following contact details:

* Telephone: 0300 111 3000
* Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET
* Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
* Contact us page on the internet: [Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/)

We are always seeking more members of our Residents’ Complaint Panel, please take a look at the Resident information section on the website under Complaints if you would like to get involved: [Housing 21 - Feedback and complaints](https://www.housing21.org.uk/resident-information/get-involved-engagement-and-feedback/feedback-and-complaints/). You can also speak to your scheme manager for further information or email us at feedback@housing21.org.uk.

A full report containing our work around complaints will be uploaded onto the website in June.