

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>54North Homes Board</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b>
<b>Report from:</b>	<b>Maggie Gjessing, Assistant Director of Customer Experience</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Annual Report 2023-24</b>
<b>Confidential</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>
<b>Agenda No.:</b>	<b>6.2</b>

	<b>Board is asked to DISCUSS and APPROVE the report and it's appendices as a true reflection of 54North's complaints handling.</b>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report outlines 54North Home's performance on complaints and compliments in 2023/24 for scrutiny and challenge and seeks input to the priorities for focus in 2024-25. It also outlines our approach to learnings and suggestions.
APPENDICES	Appendix 1 - 54North Homes Complaints Handling Code Self-assessment April 2024 Appendix 2 – Housing Ombudsman's guidance for publishing the self-assessment

STRATEGIC PLAN	AIM OR ENABLER	The 54North Homes Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy
RISK ASSESSMENT	NUMBER & TITLE	5.3 Failure to comply with all statutory compliance and the RSH Regulatory Framework for Consumer Standards 8.2 Failure to deal with complaints, compliments and suggestions effectively or manage criticism leading to damage to our reputation with our customers
	RISK APPETITE	5.3 Minimum and 10.2 Cautious
	LIKELIHOOD	5.3 - 2 and 10.2 - 2
	IMPACT	5.3 - 4 and 10.2 – 3
HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS		Not Applicable
CUSTOMER IMPACT / VIEWS		Handling complaints well impacts on the customers' experience and trust in 54North Homes. By way of regular review of our complaint and compliment performance we can identify causes for concern or celebration that will

	<p>enable us to act to continuously improve our customer experience.</p> <p>On 10 April 2024 the 54North Homes Customer Experience Committee received the 2023/24 report showing trends and progress to date, exploring key drivers and actions to tackle root causes.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	Complaints can include compensation and Ombudsman findings can also include awards of compensation. The report presents complaint compensation in 2023-24.
VALUE FOR MONEY/ PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS	Not Applicable
STAFFING IMPLICATIONS	Recent changes in guidance from the Housing Ombudsman Service and Karbon Group policy are predicted to drive up the number of formal complaints managed. We are closely monitoring the impact of these changes on capacity and opportunity cost elsewhere.
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS	We will continue to collate learnings from complaints including identifying improvements in how we support customers with additional needs, including onboarding the Karbon Vulnerability Policy once approved.
INFORMATION/ DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS	Not Applicable
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS	Not Applicable
OTHER LEGAL/ REGULATORY/ COMPLIANCE IMPLICATIONS	<p>The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code became statutory from 1 April 2024 so the importance of capturing and handling complaints well is heightened.</p> <p>The code states that a landlord's governing body should receive an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, including a self-assessment against the Code. Customers will have access to our self-assessment of the Complaint Handling Code which must be published on our website by 30 June 2024 alongside the governing body's response to the report.</p>

# **54NORTH HOMES BOARD**

## **Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Annual Report 2023-24**

### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. To present our Complaints and Compliments performance 2023-24 to 54North Homes (54NH) Board.
- 1.2. To enable Board to formally comment on our approach and focus for complaints in 2024-25.

### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1. Following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, the Housing Ombudsman's Code became statutory from 1 April 2024. There will be a legal duty placed on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord.
- 2.2. The new Code states: *Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:*
  - a. *the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its' requirements*
  - b. *a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept*
  - c. *any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman*
  - d. *the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints*
  - e. *any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and*
  - f. *any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.*

### **3. CUSTOMER INSIGHT/ IMPACT/ VIEWS**

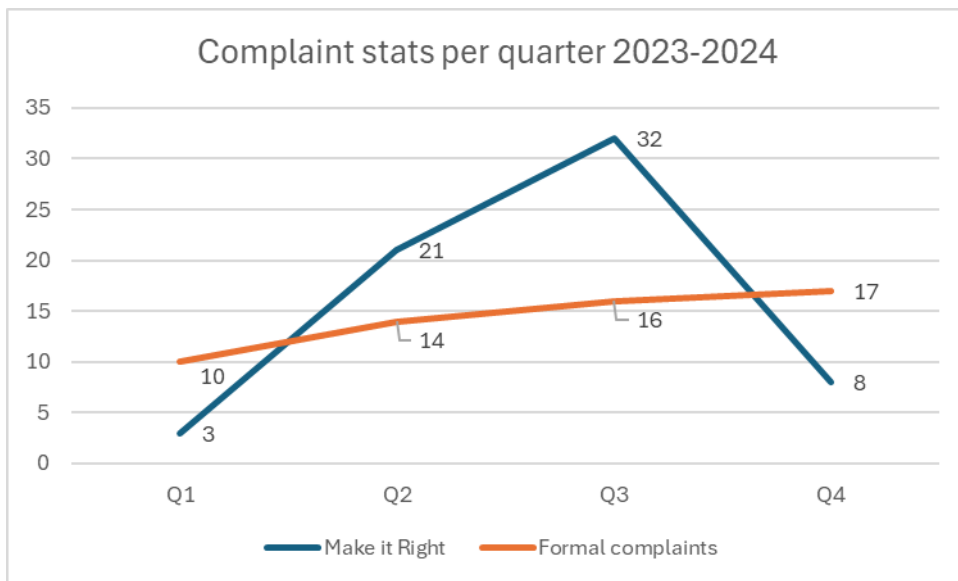
- 3.1. Handling complaints well, impacts on a customer's experience and trust in 54NH. Furthermore, this reassures customers that we are a reputable landlord through continued compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.
- 3.2. The report focuses on the feedback we have had from customer this year, via complaints and this informs our service improvement plans.

### **4. SUMMARY OF KEY RISKS AND ISSUES**

- 4.1. Risk of non-compliance with the Complaint Handling code could realise risk via adjudications and associated remedies, publication of adjudications, attention from the Regulator with additional financial penalties. Maladministration adjudications can potentially impact V1/G1 status and associated reputational damage.

## 5. REPORT

5.1. The diagram below shows the number of complaints and former Make It Right requests received for the year 2023 – 24.



For this report only, stage 1 and stage 2 complaints have been combined as 'formal complaints' as it is unclear from the data available for formal complaints for Q1 and Q2. Future reporting will clearly define stage 1 and 2 complaints separately.

5.2. The summary complaints performance for the year 2023/24 is as follows:

- In Q1 we received 10 Complaints at stages 1 and 2 and 3 Make it Rights (MIR) requests from customers (which was a decrease of 13 from Q4 2022/23). The highest number was in relation to repairs and maintenance.
- In Q2 we received 14 Complaints and 21 MIR requests. The highest numbers were in relation to repairs (13) and housing management (8).
- In Q3 we received 16 Complaints (all stage 1) and 32 MIR. The rise in MIR was predicted to occur as the Complaints Policy and Procedure has been embedded across 54NH and staff have had training on the importance of recognising and handling complaints. The number of Stage 1 complaints also increased in Q3 due to the seasonal demand on heating issues & outstanding repairs that had not been completed.
- In Q4 we received 17 Complaints and 8 Make it Right requests, repairs being the highest category.

5.3. Through TSM surveys, 33% said they were satisfied with complaint handling for last financial year, noting that these 'complaints' are self-defined and not necessarily logged as formal complaints.

5.4. We offered compensation totalling £23,400 during 2023/24.

5.5. We currently have 2 cases with the Housing Ombudsman awaiting formal adjudication, these date back to before 54NH was established. As the Ombudsman investigated less than five 54NH complaints in the year, no landlord report for 2023/24 has been issued.

- 5.6. In Q4, 54NH received two Ombudsman determinations. In one, there was a service failure in the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of repairs and in the second, there was service failure by the landlord in its handling of the resident's reports of ASB. We have received no maladministration findings in either case. Both findings had already been recognised in the respective 54NH complaint responses.
- 5.7. During financial year 2023-24 the business received 24 recorded compliments. The compliments received were mainly from our customers attributed to strong colleague performance and compliments for work operatives from our contractors. We are confident that the total number of compliments received is higher than 24, however we can only use the data that has been recorded. Moving forward, all operational colleagues are requested to send all compliments received to our Customer Experience Officer who is centralising the logging of all compliments for the business.
- 5.8. We have begun to utilise a "learning journal" which will be shared quarterly with the CEC. The first of these has highlighted three areas of learning, which have been published on our website, regarding:
- i. Defect Management – improvements to our management and tracking of defects in new build properties
  - ii. Multiple reports of the same repair – new repair completion timescales
  - iii. Communication with customers - the development of our new Service Standards

## **6. SELF ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 is our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.
- 6.2 Our confident assessment that we are fully compliant with the requirements of the Code follows the extensive recent work undertaken, in partnership with the Karbon team, to revise, publish and brief out the new Complaints policy in March/April 2024.
- 6.3 This report, the self-assessment and the governing bodies response to the report will be published on our website for customers to view. The self-assessment will be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman before 30 June 2024.
- 6.4 The response will set out how the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC - The Customer Experience Committee Chair) in particular has scrutinised and challenged the self-assessment and how any risks identified as part of the review have been addressed. The MRC and Customer Experience Committee scrutinised the self-assessment at their special meeting on 30 April 2024.
- 6.5 It is proposed that that the Board Chair and the MRC agree a statement for publication following discussion at the Board.

## **7. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

- 7.1. Customer materials have been updated, including the leaflet, video & infographic, all available on our website and publicised in complaint acknowledgement letters.

- 7.2. Our Customer Experience Team have been working with colleagues to manage the timely response to complaints. We have scheduled monthly complaints meetings to discuss the previous month's complaints, ensure interventions are put in place and to track performance improvement & learnings.
- 7.3. A learning journal is now being used and learnings are tracked and shared. We will begin to present this data as part of this report to our CEC from Q1 onwards.

## **8. PROPOSED COMPLAINT FOCUS FOR 2024-25**

- 8.1. The following proposed activities are presented for discussion and agreement as our focus for this financial year:
- i. Maintaining performance on percentage of complaints resolved within timescale.
  - ii. Maintaining focus on good record keeping.
  - iii. Monitoring complaint volumes, aiming to achieve sector average for an organisation of our size.
  - iv. Improve our management information, to support performance and communication.
  - v. Embedding our new learning journal approach to support continuous improvement in our management of complaints.
  - vi. Analysis on complaint satisfaction and actions to improve the experience.

## **9. NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1. The Customer Experience team will submit the self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 June 2024.
- 9.2. We will publish this report, Board formal response and the self-assessment on our website.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 Board is asked to DISCUSS and APPROVE the report and it's appendices as a true reflection of 54North's complaints handling.
- 10.2 That the Board Chair and the MRC agree a statement for publication following discussion at the Board.