

MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLAINTS – ANNUAL COMPLAINTS STATEMENT, JUNE 2024

In my role as Members Responsible for Complaints (MRC) I am tasked with ensuring the Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code and Annual Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Performance Report undergo thorough scrutiny and challenge. This statement details the approach taken and the learning identified to deliver continuous improvement.

Juanita Crawford

54North Homes customer, Chair of the Customer Experience Committee, Board Member and Member Responsible for Complaints

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, the Code became statutory on 1 April 2024. There is now a legal duty placed on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives complaints.

The new Code states, in the following sections:

8.1 – ‘Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge.’

8.2 – ‘The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord’s governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body’s response to the report must be published alongside this.’

9.5 – ‘In addition to this, a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints (‘the MRC’).’

The Ombudsman’s guidance on the Governing Body’s response is, *‘The response should set out how the MRC has scrutinised and challenged the self-assessment and how any risks identified as part of the review have been addressed. Landlords should also include any lessons learned through the self-assessment process and actions taken as a result. The response can also highlight areas of achievement and any challenges that the landlord has faced during the reporting year.’*

MRC SCRUTINY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

The 54North Homes Board received the report “Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Annual Report 2023-24” with the Annual Self-Assessment on 9th May 2024, following scrutiny of the findings of the report and the Self-Assessment by the Customer Experience Committee across two meetings held on the 10th and 30th April 2024. Presented below is a summary of the key points addressed, learning and actions identified in these meetings.

Customer Experience Committee 10th April 2024

- The Customer Experience Committee ('The Committee') considered and scrutinised the data presented in the report, seeking clarification in a number of areas including:
 - The comparison of the metrics between quarters
 - Variations
 - The level of detail the report included.
- The Committee noted improvements in average response time in Q4 to 8 days (target is 10 days) and the discussed benefits of resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity.
- The Committee were advised that two separate data systems had been used early in the year following integration, making analysis difficult, but took assurance that the current system has been used consistently since Q2 and a new system is in development for roll out later in 2024-25.
- The Committee noted that ASB cases are a driver for complaints and took assurance that this is an area of focus for operational improvements.
- The Committee received a copy of the new learning journal as an illustration of the approach now being taken to learn from complaints.
- The Committee queried whether there were plans to introduce satisfaction surveys after complaints. Management confirmed that whilst this is not currently on the forward plan the recent scrutiny review of complaints has surfaced some really useful insight that will inform service development. The scrutiny report was subsequently considered by the CEC on 30th April 2024.
- The Committee requested that positive comments from compliments are also reported so that there is learning from what is being done well.
- Lastly the Committee discussed their role as members of stage 2 complaints panels, the value members felt was added and their enthusiasm to continue in the role. It was agreed that this would continue with the caveat that an increase in volumes of complaints was expected following the change in policy/guidance from 1st April, so capacity would need to be kept under review. Management agreed to arrange a complaints training session for non-board members of the CEC.

Customer Experience Committee 30th April 2024

- The Committee held a special meeting to consider the Annual Self-Assessment and the findings of the recent complaints scrutiny exercise.
- The Committee took assurance from reference to the Complaints policy which is available on the website alongside the "How we handle complaints" leaflet, a video and process map for customers. It was noted that the Procedure was being revised at the time of the meeting and agreed that this would be made available to Committee members in due course. The Committee felt the location of the information could be more easily accessible and a management action was agreed to review this.
- The Committee discussed the process whereby customers can raise their dissatisfaction when completing a satisfaction survey, with this then being flagged for management to follow up.

- An update was provided on the recent briefings that have been provided to customer facing colleagues, to ensure consistent delivery and confidence in applying the new complaints policy.
- The Committee discussed the importance of having a named contact for the person investigating a complaint.
- The Committee also received a presentation from the independent consultant who has led the scrutiny review of complaints. The presentation summarised the engagement with customers who had recently experienced the service and the recommendations arising from the consultation. The Committee accepted the report and management went away to consider their response to the recommendations, with actions to be agreed at the next Customer Experience Committee meeting.

54North Board 9th May 2024

- The Board undertook additional scrutiny on the data quality and took assurance from management on the explanation of historical issues following integration and robust processes now in place, with a further reconciliation exercise to be undertaken at year end.
- The Board reflected on the complaints satisfaction score reported in TSM's (33%) and the benchmarking for this which will be available for year end soon. The Board were also given an update on the recent scrutiny exercise.
- The Board took assurance from the scrutiny work the Customer Experience Committee had done to review the detail of the Annual Report and the Self-Assessment. This includes:
 - the identification of risks as part of the review and how they have been addressed
 - lessons learned through the review and self-assessment process and actions taken as a result
 - areas of achievement and challenges faced during the reporting year.

Learning Identified

In summary the following key learning points were identified during the course of the review:

- The quarterly complaints report is being improved on a iterative basis to improve the clarity of statistical reporting and trend analysis.
- The Committee supported the implementation of a learning journal, with highlights now being shared with all customers via the 54North Homes website.
- The Committee commissioned a scrutiny review of complaints that highlighted nine areas of potential service improvement that will be considered and tracked through to conclusion.
- The Committee reflected on and reiterated their commitment to being involved in stage 2 complaint reviews, despite increasing volumes following the change in policy from April 2024.
- The Committee recommended improvements to the visibility of complaints information for customers on the 54North website.

Note: This statement and associated reporting covers all homes owned and managed by 54North Homes including those managed on behalf of the Harrison and Potter Trust (Registration number A1920).