Complaints and Service Improvements

Annual report 2023-24

# Introduction

The Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that as a landlord, we are obliged by law to follow its requirements.

By working in line with the Code, HRA Housing Team aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and to use this to drive improvements across the services that we deliver to our tenants and leaseholders.

The purpose of the report is to provide assurance that HRA Housing Services are managing its formal complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code and the Council’s complaints policy and procedure.

Complaints received provide much learning for the Housing Service on where and how we need to improve. The themes and trends identified from complaints in 2023/2024, highlight the need to improve communication and information provided to tenants and improve communication and information about complaint resolution.

# HRA Governance Group

The HRA Governance Group meets quarterly and performance information relating to complaints is a standing agenda item. The Governance Group consists of the Senior Management Team, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillors and HRA Tenant representatives. Updates are also regularly given on tenant surveys, complaints improvement plan and trend analysis carried out on complaints.

# Tenant Panel

Our performance information is routinely scrutinised and challenged by residents through our Tenant and Leasehold Panel and by senior management and key stakeholders that sit on the HRA Governance Group.

Working with residents on the panel we seek to ensure that the HRA Complaints process:

* Demonstrate a clear commitment to resident governance to drive further improvements.
* Has a clear Complaints policy and process that is easily accessible.
* All HRA staff take ownership of the complaints process and are supported through regular training.
* That reasonable adjustments are made in our complaint responses, and that we proactively react, respond and record communications with our tenants.
* We actively risk manage front line complaints to identify any tenant vulnerabilities or risk of harm.
* Performance Monitoring are in place to ensure that risk assessments are carried out for ASB cases.
* Proactive management of our contractors to resolve and rectify areas of poor service.

How we collect and use your feedback:

# Performance

During the year 2023/24, the HRA complaint teams received 84 complaints. With 71 complaints resolved at stage 1 and 13 complaints escalating to stage 2. During the period, 1 complaint was investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.

Number of stage one complaints made by tenancy in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes – 23.4

Number of stage two complaints made by tenancy in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes – 4.2

For the whole year 76.1% of stage 1 complaints were responded to on time against a target of 75% and 100% of stage 2 complaints were responded

to on time.

The percentage of complaints escalated to stage 2 in 2023/2024 was 18.3%. This is a snapshot for the reporting year, it should be noted that there can often be a period in between the stage one complaint response and any escalation.

# Service Improvements

We understand that sometimes things do go wrong and it is important to us to learn from this.

Things we have put in place following complaints to us:

* Increased signage in blocks to ensure your health and safety;
* Adjusted the trades times on some door entry systems to reduce the potential for ASB

Using feedback from customer perception surveys we have also devised a complaints improvement plan to ensure that:

* Making a complaint is easy;
* Contact details are easy to find and regularly published to customers;
* Key staff receive annual training for dealing with and responding to complaints;
* We have a proactive approach to supporting customers through increased drop in surgeries, events and monthly area door knocks.

What we will continue to work on

* Reduce the financial impact of complaints by getting things right first time more often.
* Training staff to empowered and have the time to respond positively to customer complaints
* Showcase good practice and share more widely the learning from complaints.

Looking Forward

The Council have implemented a complaints satisfaction survey [Complaints Learning](https://www.medway.gov.uk/ComplaintsLearning) with a view to increasing our feedback to facilitate further improvement where indicated.

A complaints action plan has been developed to monitor and improve our complaint process. This focuses on the key areas of

* Embedding the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code
* Learning from complaints
* Communicating and working with tenants to improve the complaints process.
* Working in partnership with our contractors to embed service standards.
* Provide complaints training to all staff.

# Self-assessment

Our self-assessment has been written alongside this annual report and has been published on our website here: [Housing ombudsman self assessment 2024](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/8751/housing_ombudsman_assessment_2024)

HRA Governance Group and Tenant Panel Response:

The HRA Governance Group recognise the importance of reviewing information about HRA complaints performance and to hear directly from tenants through quarterly reports and updates from tenant representatives who are active members of the Governance Group.

 The Tenant Panel and Governance Group have reviewed the annual complaints performance report and self-assessment (against the Housing Ombudsman complaints handling code).

 During the year 2023/24, the HRA complaint teams received 84 complaints. With 71 complaints resolved at stage 1 and 13 complaints escalating to stage 2. During the period, 1 complaint was investigated by the Housing Ombudsman. We recognise that this is a significant number but are proactively seeking to engage with tenants to advise of the complaints process and identify barriers to communicating dissatisfaction.

During the course of this year, there has been a lot of activity undertaken to ensure that we continuously improve services to tenants and to hear the voice of customers. This has been done through:

* monthly Big Door Knock events to survey tenant satisfaction
* Housing Ombudsman Working Group
* Regular Complaints meetings
* Learning from complaints embedded in operational service delivery
* The introduction of tenant committees with a focus on learning from complaints (due autumn 2024)
* The appointment of a complaint representative from the scrutiny panel
* Introduced a complaint survey following complaint resolution to identify areas for service improvement
* Developed a complaint action plan
* Complaints are a key performance indicator that we monitor to ensure that the voice of the tenant is listened to and acted on to continuously improve.