



Complaints Performance and Service Improvement 2023/24

Introduction

This report provides an update on Westfield's complaint handling performance over the last financial year and highlights the changes we have made as a result of the learnings from complaints.

This report will cover:

- an update on the recent changes to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) Code
- our self-assessment against that code
- an overview of the complaints we have received
- some of the changes we are implementing to improve our complaints process
- the learnings we have embedded from complaints over the past year.

Complaints Handling Code 2024

In September 2023, the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) along with the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, published a further, revised Complaint Handling Code for consultation. The final version was published in February 2024. The code came into effect from 1st April 2024.

The key changes to the code are:

The HOS has a new statutory duty to monitor landlords' compliance with the Code.

Housing organisations need to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which will include an annual self-assessment against the code.

The complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the Board and published on the website along with Boards response to the report.

A suitable senior executive must be appointed to oversee complaint handling and performance in addition to a member of the governing body (Board Member) being appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints.

The reporting of complaints, including the improvement report, has been aligned to the requirements of the TSMs. Submissions must be via a dedicated electronic form and submitted by 30 June 2024.

To raise landlord awareness of the need to comply with their duties under the Equality Act 2010, including anticipating any needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who need to access the complaints process and keeping reasonable adjustments under active review.

Self Assessment

We have conducted a full self-assessment of our compliance against the code and have fully critiqued our approach. We identified areas that needed improvement and have implemented these.

The implementation of the complaints module last year has helped to improve record keeping and analysis.

We have been briefing staff during the development of the HOS Code. In July we will carry out a further briefing, and training for staff and Managers.

Our full 2024 Self Assessment against the Code has been published on our website.

Complaints Overview

Over the course of the last financial year, Westfield Housing logged 13 complaints. These were all dealt with as stage 1 complaints and therefore no complaints progress to stage 2.

The tables below breaks down complaints:

Complaints Received	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total Complaints	3	5	3	2

Complaints Logged by Stages	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	3	5	3	2
Stage 2	0	0	0	0
Cases escalated to The Housing Ombudsman	0	0	0	0

Complaint received by type/service area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Grounds Maintenance		2		
Repairs	1		1	1
Energy Efficiency Work (SHDF)				1
Parking	1		1	
Development	1	1		
Environmental		2		
Allocations			1	

Reason for the Complaint	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Dissatisfaction with service provided by contractors/WHA	1	2		1
Failure or refusal to do something a tenant wants us to do	1	3	1	1
Delays with Repairs	1		1	
Dissatisfaction with allocations			1	

Complaints answered on time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	100%	100%	100%	100%
Stage 2	-	-	-	-

Complaints Outcomes	Stage 1	Stage 2
Upheld	8	-
Partially upheld	0	-
Not upheld	5	-
Open (response to be provided)	0	-
Total	13	-

What have we learnt?

Based on lessons learnt from above complaints and feedback from tenants we have done the following:

- A small number of additional parking spaces have been created within our new development schemes and 'corner' plots on the estate have been identified as other possible sites to accommodate parking. However, no budget for this has been allocated in 2024/25 due to other priorities such as energy efficiency work, compliance and planned maintenance programmes. We have met with Cumberland Council who confirmed they cannot fund additional parking (Westfield isn't unique and this is an issue everywhere), however can look to create communal charging facilities on sites. We will also ensure we feed into a 4 yearly consultation ahead of Cumberlands highways review to further highlight the issues raised by residents. We will also review the Communal Frontages Policy in 2025 in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman ruling of 1999.
- Early this year we re-tendered our grounds maintenance contract. We invited 5 local contractors to tender and based on feedback received from residents asked contractors to price for both collection and non collection of grass, we received three submissions. Tivoli submitted a competitive tender for the contract which meant we could deliver what residents had requested and have the grass collected on each cut.
- A tenant receiving internal wall insulation as part of our SHDF project made a complaint regarding the level of upheaval, disruption and the time it takes for this type of work to be carried out. We have therefore revisited our SHDF programme and agreed alternative, less disruptive measures with our Contractor to avoid this level of disruption for any future tenants benefitting from these works.
- The introduction of the contractor portal allows contractors to complete repairs on our system in real time. They can also upload photo's and notify us of any potential delays where parts need to be ordered. This has improved repair completion times and reduced the number of outstanding repairs. We are currently exploring ways to notify tenants that repairs have been reported and any target dates assigned to the repair to avoid follow calls.

Compliments

We receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing when things are working well and are appreciated is just as important as knowing when things are not working as well as we would like. We therefore keep a record of the compliments we receive as well as any complaints. Good practice and learning can then be circulated across the organisation.

From April up until the end of March, we received 19 recorded compliments. There were 15 recorded for the same period when compared to the previous year.

Board Response

Our Board appointed Kevin Foley, as Board Member Responsible for Complaints (BMRC). His role is to help ensure:

- Our self-assessment against the HOS code is scrutinised and challenged.
- Scrutinising and reviewing our complaints performance information and evidence to assure Board it's accurate and reliable.
- Challenging any commentary to ensure we make a fair and reasonable assessment about how we're doing.

We report to our Board quarterly to keep them informed of complaints performance, key issues, learning and improvement.

“Following a review at the Board meeting held on 22nd May 2024, I can confirm that all Members were satisfied that the Complaints Handling Code is being adhered to and that Westfield are taking positive steps to learn and improve from their complaints. The Self-Assessment has been completed and provides assurance on how Westfield are adhering to the code”- Kevin Foley, Member Responsible for Complaints & Board Member.

If you have any feedback about the self-assessment, any more general comments about how we deal with complaints, require any further information or would like to get involved in reviewing our complaints process please let us know by emailing us at enquiries@westfieldha.org.uk