

## **Board Response to Annual Self-Assessment with Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**

**June 2024**

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The Board has reviewed the self-assessment prepared by the staff team as well as considering the annual report on Learning from Complaints and the updated Complaints Policy. We believe that our organisation takes complaints seriously as a tool to really hear from residents about things that can improve in the way we deliver services or provide homes. The changes made to align with the new Housing Ombudsman Code have improved our approach and included moving from a three to a two-stage process.

As a small, community-based housing association, we are often very close to the issues that residents have cause to complaint about. We think it is helpful that we can often deal with issues face to face and quickly. Although we do not get lots of complaints, everyone in our team will be aware of new complaints and the circumstances which gave rise to them. Issues are often discussed in our weekly team huddles so that we get different perspectives and views before making a decision on how to respond – and again, we think that this helps to make sure our team is able to learn quickly and consistently.

Our Tenant Engagement Panel, which includes the Board Member Responsible for Complaints, works with us to improve how we give service to residents. We involved the panel in reviewing our policy, processes and looking at real (anonymous) complaints responses. With the latter, the panel were able to give a fresh perspective on where we can improve and, indeed, where we have responded well.

The Board reviews complaints performance at every meeting and has been involved directly in seeking to resolve one more serious and ongoing complaint this year. As part of that process, we involved and experienced an independent complaints assessor to help the Board to objectively assess the work of the team in managing the resident's concerns. We felt that this was a helpful process which we will use in future.

Our Learning from Complaints report identified a number of areas for improvement. We also learned from the comments made during our resident surveys in the early part of 2023. So far, the feedback has led to: -

- A new out of hours service which has improved resident experience
- A new process for managing repairs to speed up the completion of work
- Reduced repairs turnaround times (14d – 10d)

- Improved satisfaction with most recent repair
- A training programme on ASB, Complaint Handling, Safeguarding and Neurodivergence for our staff team
- Planning to upgrade our systems so that we have easier access to information and can provide more effective service to residents in a convenient way

We have identified that we don't always 'hear' a complaint when it is made, and the team are focused on making sure that any expression of dissatisfaction is captured and responded to formally. We think this is helpful to the resident and to the team as it means that issues can be aired and addressed and reach a conclusion – hopefully bringing the relationship back to a positive place.

Overall, the Board feels confident that the team are responding to complaints in line with the expectations of the code and in line with our business values. We are not complacent and know that there is always room for improvement, and we will keep complaints under close review throughout the year.

Steve Dennis  
**Chair, PHA Homes**