

Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvements Report 2024-25

Governing Body Response to the Report

The Council values all customer feedback, including complaints and is required to follow the approach to complaint handling set out in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the Code), which is endorsed by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Since July 2024, the Council has been subject to formal engagement with the Regulator of Social Housing and have introduced a Housing Improvement Plan to improve our landlord services. The handling of complaints is a key area of these improvements and while we are satisfied that we are compliant with the Code, we recognise there is more we can do to improve how we handle complaints. We have introduced a number of improvements designed to:

- Make it easier for our customers to make a complaint.
- Ensure complaints are acknowledged and responded to quickly.
- Improve complaint handling by all front-line Housing staff.
- Carry out timely investigations into each complaint and aim to offer an appropriate resolution.
- Learn from our mistakes and report where these are, and the improvements we have put in place as a result of them.

The Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-25 details the number of complaints we have received, trends and themes on the types of complaints made, our performance when handling complaints, our learning as a result, and our planned improvements for 2025-26. This report has been considered by our senior management and the Audit and Governance Committee and both agree it reflects our position and our plans for improvement.

The report shows we have not handled complaints as well as we could. We have not always acknowledged or responded to complaints in the timescales set out in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. We have introduced a new monitoring system to ensure we improve in this area and keep our customers informed on how their complaint is being handled and to provide them with a full and detailed response.

Improvements to our complaints handling highlighted in the report, include:

- Introduction of a dedicated resource to improve how complaints are recorded, monitored and reported on.
- Introduction of new policies and processes to deal with complaints, compensation and reasonable adjustments.
- Addressing poor communication with residents, including accessing the complaint process and repairs service.
- Introduction of transactional surveys for complaints, to ensure we identify low satisfaction in real time and identify issues quickly and respond promptly.
- Involve customers on the changes they would like to see to the complaints process.

During the coming year we will monitor the effectiveness of these changes and continue to scrutinise complaints data and trends.

As the Member Responsible for Complaints, I will ensure complaints performance, the progress of improvements and their outcomes are available to demonstrate continuous learning and improvement.

Councillor Rob Lillis, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Housing