

Appendix 6

Our Commitment to Improving our Complaints Handling - Governing Body's statement

The Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (SRPC) form the Governing Body responsible for oversight of housing-related complaints. The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) is Cllr Belbin, who is lead Member for all of Sheffield City Council's (SCC) complaints.

The Council's annual complaints performance report – which gives information covering all council services including Housing – was presented to and scrutinised at the Strategy and Resources Committee at our meeting on 24th July 2024 [Agenda for Strategy and Resources Policy Committee on Wednesday 24 July 2024, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council](#). Colleagues on the Council's Housing Policy Committee also undertook a detailed review of the self-assessment at their June meeting [Agenda for Housing Policy Committee on Thursday 20 June 2024, 10.00 am | Sheffield City Council](#) (Item 11) and the Chair of that Committee was also present at the meeting of Strategy and Resources.

We are pleased and reassured to see that on the whole SCC comply with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. This area of work has been a key priority for the housing service over the last 2 years, and there have been noticeable improvements in how we handle complaints from our tenants. For example, letter templates have been updated to help ensure that customers receive a full response to all their issues; the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) on which customer complaints are recorded has also been upgraded to help facilitate more robust recording, reporting and management of complaints; and we have improved our analysis of complaints data to identify improvements and to provide more feedback to tenants about the actions that we have taken as a result.

However, the self-assessment has also highlighted a section of the Code where further improvements are needed. This is in relation to the required timescales for resolving complaints, and, whilst our policy is compliant with the Code, our performance in this area is below where we need to be. We are fully aware of this, and of the work which Officers are undertaking to address this.

There are several improvements which we are asking Officers to focus on over the coming months:

- Improving the accuracy and recording of complaints, with a particular focus on Stage 2 complaints.
- Significantly increasing the number of remedies and learning recorded upon closure of a complaint.
- Ensuring that all recorded learning is reported to and considered by managers, and that the impact of this learning on service improvements is captured and shared with customers.

- Joint working between the corporate Complaints Team and services / managers to increase the number of compliments and suggestions recorded.
- Benchmarking with other Local Authorities to learn from shared and best practice, which can then be used to further improve performance.
- Increasing the sample size of customer surveys to help improve our understanding of how customers feel when using our complaint process, and making any necessary changes based on this feedback.
- Improving equality analysis of customer feedback, to help identify any differences between different demographic groups in relation to complaints.
- Ensuring there is an improved and independent process for analysing complaints-related survey results.
- Reporting complaints at a geographical level, aligned to the Local Area Committees.

Complaints performance will continue to be monitored at a senior level on a quarterly basis, and we know that our colleagues on the Housing Policy Committee scrutinise and discuss housing-related performance in their public Committee meetings. At service-manager level, complaints are reported and monitored on a weekly basis to help managers, and their teams progress their complaints quickly and effectively.

Linked to this weekly reporting, we are also aware that fortnightly complaints surgeries are held, led by a Head of Service and a corporate Complaints Manager. These surgeries focus on complaints on a case-by-case basis and agree a way forward to resolve them as quickly as possible. Managers from service areas come together in a monthly housing complaint working group, and we are keen for this partnership working to continue.

We will continue to closely monitor and scrutinise complaints on a regular basis and hope to see further improvements in the coming months. If the necessary improvements are not realised – particularly those relating to the HO's required timescales for complaints handling – we will discuss with Officers what more can be done and will not be satisfied until these target timescales are achieved.