



Introduction

This report provides an update on Sunderland City Council's complaint handling performance over the last financial year and highlights the changes we have made because of the learnings from complaints. Sunderland City Council had 149 tenancies for this financial year. Offering tenancies for General needs housing, Supported living for those with a learning disability and supported accommodation for rough sleepers and survivors of domestic abuse.

This report will cover:

- An update on the recent changes to the Housing Ombudsman Code
- Our self-assessment against that code
- An overview of the complaints we have received
- Some of the changes we have implemented to improve our complaints process
- The learnings we have gained from complaints over the past year

Complaint Handling Code 2024

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the scheme should have in place for considering complaints.

It also placed a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with a code of practice that it has issued. The Code clarifies the definition of a complaint, how complaints can be made, the process that should be used and the governance structure around complaints.

The code also instructs Social Housing Providers to produce this report to show compliance with the code.

Self-assessment

A detailed self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code will be published on our website. In summary, this will show that we are compliant with the Code.

Some of the changes made in this financial year as a result of the implementation of the code are;

- The Housing Operations Manager confirmed as the Senior Person Responsible for Complaints to assess any themes or trends to identify potential issues, risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.
- A new complaint management system has been successfully implemented allowing staff to allocate, update and review all complaints across the organisation.
- Housing Operations staff have attended workshops facilitated by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to complaint handling
- Recording of first-time resolution issues within the Housing Team
- Our Complaints Policy has been updated to reflect the new changes within the Code

Complaints Overview

Stage 1 Complaints 2023/24

Anti – Social Behaviour	2
Rent	1
Repairs	3
Policy	1

Of those complaints 3 were upheld, 2 partially upheld and 2 not upheld. 85% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days.

Stage 2 Complaints 2023/24

Repairs	1
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There was 1 stage 2 complaint logged for this reporting period; the case was responded to within 20 working days giving a 100% response rate. The case was partially upheld.

In 2023/24 there were 0 complaints that we refused to accept.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

All 149 tenants were surveyed as part of the inaugural Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. 37.5% said they were happy with the landlord's approach to complaints, however out of 149 tenancies only 7 made a formal complaint.

Housing Ombudsman determinations

There were no Housing Ombudsman determinations for 2023/24.

Learning from Complaints

During 2023/24 the following service improvements were made as a result of tenants making a complaint.

- A new appointment system was put in place so that tenants repair requests are electronically recorded and a date for repair issued to them if the work is classed as a standard repair.
- Training for the Housing Operations Team in complaint handling
- A new lettable standard checklist was introduced

Compliance

During the self-assessment against the code of guidance we have made changes to our policy to ensure compliance. Areas that may require future work include the Governing bodies response and scrutiny of the Housing Services Monitoring Group in relation to complaints.

Complaints will have a set agenda item at quarterly meetings attended by the Housing Board where themes, trends and compliance will be monitored. An annual complaints report will also be published each year.

Sunderland City Council have not received any reports from the Housing Ombudsman in relation to performance.

As a result of the Housing Ombudsman's publication "a spotlight on Damp and Mould" a new process was designed to assist tenants who may have issues with Damp and Mould. This includes acknowledging the matter within 2 working days, inspecting within 5 working days and having the ability to refer to specialist contractors when required.

Tenants will also receive literature to help combat the problem along with receiving two aftercare visits to ensure the issue has been fully resolved.