

Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023-24

Introduction

This report provides an update on Luton Community Housing Limited's (T/A Squared) complaint handling performance over the last financial year.

It is linked to our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and highlights the changes the learnings from complaints and our intended actions to inform service improvement.

Squared's purpose is to improve the lives of our customers by providing good quality, affordable accommodation for those in need in our local community and our mission is to place our customers at the heart of everything we do. Squared views complaints and any other feedback, including comments and compliments as an opportunity to learn, improve service delivery and team member development. Complaints help us do this as they give us an opportunity to put things right for our customer, in a fair and reasonable way.

The content of this report includes:

- 1) An update on the recent changes to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) Code.
- 2) Our self-assessment against that code.
- 3) A summary of the number and types of complaints we handle including the issues raised by our customers.
- 4) An overview of the determinations we have received from the HO.
- 5) A summary of the learning and service improvements we propose to be implementing to improve our complaints process and service delivery.

1) Complaint Handling Code 2024

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the Housing Ombudsman (HO) to issue a Code of Practice about the procedures members of the scheme should have in place when considering complaints. It also placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code of Practice 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 Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024.

2) Self-assessment

To demonstrate our compliance with the Code, a detailed self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code can be found in the footer of every page on our website under Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Some of the key changes made since our last published assessment in 2023 are:

- The appointment of, Jo Simcox, as Board member lead responsible for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture.
- Review of our in-house complaints system.
- Housing Ombudsman eLearning course roll out to all front facing and other relevant team members:
 - Dispute Resolution
 - Applying Dispute Resolution Principles
- Development and implementation of in-house training sessions on the practical application of effective complaint handling.
- Our Complaints Policy and Procedure has also been reviewed to reflect the new Code.

3) A summary of the number and types of complaints we handle including the issues raised by our customers

We received 25 complaints during 2023-2024.

24 complaints were handled at stage 1, in line with our complaints policy, and one was escalated to stage 2.

On average complaints were resolved within 19 days.

One complaint was not accepted in full which resulted in the Complaints Handling Failure Order.

Complaints by Service Area	Number
Homes with Support (Hostels & HMOs)	13
Housing Services	9
Property Services	3
Total	25

Complaint Reason by stage	Stage 1	Stage 2
Outstanding repair	4	
Cleaning	1	1
Dissatisfaction with staff member	8	
Neighbour related issue	5	
Landlord complaint	1	
Loss of property	1	
Noise	1	
Quality of support	1	
About another company	1	
Rent	1	
Total	24	1

According to our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), an annual survey across our customers, four out of ten residents who made a complaint in the last 12 months were satisfied with our handling of their complaint (40%).

4) An overview of the determinations we have received from the Housing Ombudsman

We received a Complaint Handling Failure Order issued on 19 December 2023. This was due to lack of evidence that we had raised and responded to a customer's complaint fully and in a way that was compliant with the Code, constituting in a failure to adhere to paragraph 9 of the Scheme.

We received a letter from the Housing Ombudsman on 3 January 2024 for non-compliance with the CHFO. This was due to not providing any evidence of compliance with the order. The case will now be treated as having exhausted our formal complaint procedure under paragraph 32 of The Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

We have conducted a full internal investigation with regard to our failings which came about following the end of a joint venture scheme which resulted in our lack of ownership of the customer.

We have implemented a training package consisting of an in-house training sessions and Housing Ombudsman eLearning training to ensure this does not happen again and to encourage and support a positive complaint handling culture.

5) A summary of the learning and service improvements we propose to implement to improve our complaints process and service delivery

A number of improvements have been identified or are being implemented to improve our complaints handling and service delivery.

- Improve our response time to complaints by ensuring team members understand our complaints policy and procedure. Aiming for 100% Stage 1 responses within 10 days and Stage 2 responses within 20 days, unless additional time requested, granted and agreement formally recorded and shared with customer.
- Improve our communication with customers during a complaint investigation if an extension of time is required or any agreed follow up action is identified.
- Introduce new IT software to improve our record-keeping and reporting.
- Increasing customer satisfaction with our complaint handling by focusing on resolution first time.
- Improve our customer experience when using our telephone system to ensure they reach the right department first time.
- Clearly communicate our standard response times to customers who make contact with us.
- Develop a culture whereby we note the learning each time a complaint is completed and any steps we need to take to improve services for customers.
- Improve our customer communication with regard to repair completion dates particularly if a contractor is carrying out the repair, so that the customer feels informed every step of the way.
- Ensure that complaints about neighbours are managed with clarity. If we have stated that we will not be able to get involved the reasons should be fully explained. If there

are circumstances under which we can get involved these should be made clear and any responses should be consistent.

- Introduce a process where the Leadership Team is briefed in detail on complaint trends and areas of focus to ensure lessons are not simply identified but learnt, acted upon and measures are put in place to drive improvement.
- Increase the ratio of post inspection visits to learn lessons about both the quality of the repair and associated materials supplied.
- Increase oversight of opens jobs by regular system interrogation leading to improvement in work scheduling and outstanding job identification.
- Monitor internal capacity for repairs particularly at times of peak demand to ensure we engage with local subcontractors to support our repairs service in a timely manner.
- Review the capacity of our new housing management system with regard to keeping our customers informed digitally but understanding that a proportion of our customers prefer personal contact.
- Fully utilise data available to us about our properties to enable us to manage damp and mould effectively through our inspection regime and working towards a proactive, data driven solution to identify damp and mould in customers' homes.
- Introduction of robust action plans across the organisation to ensure the monitoring and progress of improvement actions.
- Introduction of CX feedback software to facilitate spot surveys to monitor any service improvements implemented.