



<b>Report To:</b>	Performance Monitoring Panel
<b>Date:</b>	26/05/26
<b>Subject:</b>	Housing Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report and Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code
<b>Purpose:</b>	Update members on performance of our Complaints Service 25/26 against the Housing Ombudsman Code
<b>Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing
<b>Report Of:</b>	Vikki Cherry, Service Director for Housing
<b>Report Author:</b>	Beverley Chapman, Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All
<b>Exempt Report:</b>	No

### Summary

The purpose of this report is for PMP to scrutinise the Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26 at Appendix 1 and note the Annual Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment form at Appendix 2 which forms part of the annual submission requirements by the Housing Ombudsman.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that PMP scrutinises both documents and recommends any changes required before the report goes to Cabinet.

It is also recommended that PDP agree the drafted response to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report – which is on slide 4 of the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report Appendix 1

### Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure the Housing Landlord Services are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice

### **Other Options Considered**

**Do Nothing** - not produce an Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report – this option is not recommended as it would leave the organisation non-compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector, regardless of the size or type of landlord. The Code encourages landlord-tenant relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong.
- 1.2 The Complaints Handling Code requires social landlords to undertake an annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman on how well the organisation conforms with the Regulator's Code of Guidance on dealing with complaints relating to its landlord service.
- 1.3 The annual submission must include four key elements:
  - SHDC self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code
  - SHDC Annual Complaint, Performance and Service Improvement Report
  - The response of the Council's Governing Body to the Annual report
  - The Council's Complaint Policy.
- 1.4 The Annual Complaint, performance and Service Improvement Report is required to provide the following information:
  - The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code
  - A qualitative and quantitative analysis of complaint handling performance, including a summary of complaint the Council has refused to accept
  - Any findings of non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code by the Housing Ombudsman
  - The service improvements made because of learning from complaints
  - Any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman
  - Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.
- 1.5 The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report must be reported to the landlords governing body and published on the section of it's website relating to complaints.
- 1.6 The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

## **2. Report**

- 2.1 In-line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, SHDC operates a two-stage complaint process, ensuring accessibility, transparency and fairness for tenants.
- 2.2 This is our second Annual report on Complaints since we began reporting on our complaint's performance. In addition to volumes and timeliness the report also highlights themes and root causes of complaints, those that have been upheld, a comparison to last year's data and lessons learned focussing on service improvements.
- 2.4 Performance Management on complaints is reviewed:
- Monthly at our Compliance Clinic by the Member Responsible for Complaints, Service Director for Housing, Executive Director - Communities, and Service Managers.
  - Quarterly at our Complaints Working Group – by the Member Responsible for Complaints and Service Team leaders
  - Quarterly by members at PMP
  - Quarterly at our Tenant led Complaints and Performance Focus Group
  - Quarterly by our Tenant Influence Panel
  - Annually our Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment is scrutinised by Members at PMP and Cabinet and by our Tenants at the Complaints and Performance Focus Group and our Tenant Panel.
- 2.5 Highlights from Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report (Appendix 1):

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>
Volumes of complaints	<b>189</b> S1 received	<b>12</b> S2 received
Timeliness of responses	<b>97.88%</b> for S1	<b>100%</b> for S2
Extensions to timescales – still in line with Housing Ombudsman	<b>12 – 6.34%</b>	<b>1 – 8.33%</b>
Comparison to last year	Decrease of <b>24</b> S1	Decrease of <b>16</b> S2
Reductions in complaints	During 2025 Damp Condensation and Mould works brought in-house resulting in 47% less complaints being received for that area compared to 24/25	Better S1 responses
Upheld / partially upheld	124 S1 <b>66%</b>	6 S2 <b>50%</b>
Not Upheld	48 S1 <b>34%</b>	6 S2 <b>50%</b>
Main reason for complaint – as tenant reported	79 Unreasonable delays in service <b>42%</b>	6 Unreasonable delays in service <b>50%</b>
Service area:		
Property Services	45%	4%
Repairs	19%	4%
Estate Management	17%	4%
DCM	10%	
Voids	4%	
Business Support	3%	
ILO	2%	

- **Transparency** – Members scrutinise our performance through PMP and Tenants are involved in scrutinising performance through our Focus Group and Tenants Influence Panel
- **Service Improvements** – are being embedded into services and continuous improvement is taking place.

2.6 Priorities for the coming year:

Priority	Action by
Strengthen feedback mechanisms for the service by conducting sample phone satisfaction surveys	June 2026
Introduce sample audits on actions and learnings	July 2026
Improve the collection and usage of our demographic information to improve support for vulnerable tenants to enable them to complain and ensure their needs are properly understood and reflected in our learnings	August 2026
Work with our Transformation Team to ensure that complaints on repair timescales continue to drive our focus on the service during the Transformation review and going forward.	September 2026
Work with tenants to produce a simple, clear leaflet on the complaints process	October 2026

2.7 Each year we must also submit a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and provide details and evidence to substantiate or responses to each of the 72 requirements within the code.

2.8 This year we have consulted with our Complaints and Performance Focus Group and our Tenants Panel to provide feedback on the way in which SHDC approaches and deals with complaints from tenants.

2.9 Following our review this year and listening to our tenants and reviewing the complaints received for the year the self-assessment (Appendix 2) has highlighted 7 areas where we have identified further improvement which we can implement to strengthen our performance and compliance with the code. These fall under the following sections of the Code:

Section of code	Code Provision	Area for Improvement	Area of training	By when
Definition of a complaint	1.3		Complaint Workshops to take place with all internal staff, departments and contractors to improve access to complaints for tenants.	Oct 26
	1.4		Complaint Workshops to take place with all internal staff, departments and contractors to improve understanding of the difference between a service request and complaint.	Oct 26

	1.6	Check all transactional surveys include signposting to complaints		June 26
Exclusions	2.3		Complaint Workshops to take place through 26/27 with all internal staff, departments and Contractors to clarify understanding of timescales when complaints raised.	Oct 26
Accessibility and Awareness	3.2		Complaint Workshops to take place through 26/27 with all internal staff, departments and Contractors to remind them about our Complaints process.	Oct 26
	3.4	Work with tenants to devise a clear simple leaflet regarding complaints.		Oct 26
Complaint Handling Staff	4.3		Complaint Workshops to take place through 26/27 with all internal staff, departments and Contractors to remind them about recording and implementing learnings	Oct 26
Complaint Handling Process	5.4		Complaint Workshops to take place through 26/27 with all internal staff, departments and Contractors to remind them that all complaints regarding contractors should come through SHDC	Oct 26
	5.8	Sign off responses by Complaints Officer to be introduced.		July 26
Complaint Stages	6.5 S1 6.16 S2	To check all template letters regarding extensions, include Housing Ombudsman details		June 26
	6.6 S1 6.17 S2	Sample Audit learnings and actions to provide assurance for the service that all actions and learnings are implemented		Aug 26
Putting things right	7.1	Draft a compensation Policy in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance		Aug 26
	7.2 / 7.4			
	7.3	Sample audit actions to remedy complaint to assure effectiveness and satisfaction		Sept 26

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1. Housing Services has taken clear steps to improve our complaint handling and deliver better outcomes for our tenants. We remain committed to working with members and our tenants to remain transparent and listen to them.
- 3.2. We are using complaints to drive improvements where they are needed, and our focus remains on continuous improvement of the service, as highlighted by our self-assessment.
- 3.3. Action plan for improvements is drafted and will be monitored via our Complaints and Performance Focus Group and scrutinised by our Tenant Influence Panel.

### **Implications**

#### **South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership**

None

#### **Corporate Priorities**

*The Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report and Annual Self-Assessment will support the following Corporate Priority:*

- *Our Council - Continue to ensure that our regulatory and statutory services remain fully compliant with all current and emerging legislation.*
- *Your Home – We will be a landlord of choice for our council housing tenants. Delivery of the Policies set out how we will make improvements to our service and take on board the views of our tenants.*

#### **Staffing**

None

#### **Workforce Capacity Implications**

None

#### **Constitutional and Legal Implications**

The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State under section 51 of the Housing Act 1996. Local housing authorities in England which are registered providers of social housing must be members of the scheme. This policy supports compliance and mitigates the risk of complaint handling failure orders and/or financial penalties.

The Housing Complaints Working Group meets quarterly to review trends and analysis of complaints and information regarding benchmarked Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. Attended by the Service Director for Housing, Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing, Information Manager and Data Protection Officer, Service Leads, Complaints Co-Ordinator and the Tenant Influence and Engagement Lead, this Group serves to ensure that

all complaints have oversight from all relevant sections of the Council. It also holds Service leads to account in their role as investigating officers.

On 14th February 2023, Cabinet approved that the Service Director – Housing has authority to authorise payment of compensation in connection with complaints regarding the Council's function as a social landlord of up to £1,000 in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing.

### **Data Protection**

none

### **Financial**

None

### **Risk Management**

None

### **Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales**

The Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and Action plan for improvements was taken to our Tenant Influence Panel on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – the following changes have been incorporated:

- *The Panel wanted to acknowledge the report through a "Foreword" note which has been added.*
- *The Panel noted that Contractor complaints appeared high and requested a breakdown of which contractor area these related to in the report.*
- *The Panel noted that the report Title and who the information was for didn't include tenants and wanted this changing.*

### **Reputation**

Ongoing reviews of performance reduces the risk of reputational damage caused by enforcement from the Social Housing Regulator and/or the Housing Ombudsman (of which is published on the Ombudsman's website and social media channels).

### **Contracts**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding**

The Council is committed to treating everyone fairly and shall ensure that it complies with the Equality Act 2010. The document is accessible to all.

Documents and access to the service has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious belief, or disability of service users or residents.

The Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report refers to reasonable adjustments taken to accommodate a person's needs.

Where we identify, or a customer advises us of, a vulnerability we make reasonable adjustments to our services accordingly to meet the needs of those individuals. This may include altering the way we communicate with a customer to adjusting the service that we offer to that person. Each case will be judged on its individual merits to avoid a one size fits all approach.

## Health and Wellbeing

By transparently sharing performance data with tenants and Members, the report demonstrates the Council's commitment to maintaining safe and healthy housing environments.

## Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment

*Not Undertaken*

## Acronyms

None

## Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix 1	Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report
Appendix 2	Self-Assessment against Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice

## Background Papers

Document Title	Where the Document can be viewed
Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code	<a href="https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/11/Complaint-HandlingCode.pdf">https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/11/Complaint-HandlingCode.pdf</a>

## Chronological History of this Report

*A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body*

## Report Approval

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