

Rugby Borough Council Housing Service Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/2024

Report from	Communities and Projects Manager
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1. Introduction

Rugby Borough Council is committed to learning from the complaints it receives and to assist this has produced this report for 2023/24.

In 2024/25 we will produce quarterly complaints reports which we will use to:

- Identify trends in complaints coming forward.
- Scrutinise our complaint handling to embed an ethos of continuous improvement.
- Inform our tenants about the type of complaints we receive and how we learn from these complaints to improve our service to them.

Our quarterly complaints reports will inform our quarterly Lessons Learnt Clinics at which we will review complaints, understand trends if appropriate, and identify and monitor actions required. This approach is being cascaded throughout Rugby Borough Council.

2. Summary

This report sets out the results of an analysis of complaints performance in 2023/24 including learning outcomes and actions being taken to address. This satisfies the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code which requires the identification and sharing of intelligence and learning from complaints. The analysis in this report is of complaints made in respect of our landlord service:

- Tenancy Management
- Management of neighbourhoods and communities
- Responsive repairs and asset management including planned works and environmental improvements
- Allocation of Rugby Borough Council homes
- Tenant involvement, empowerment and communications with our tenants

3. How we will use this report

This report will enable regular updates on the volume and categories of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This report will enable themes or trends to be assessed by relevant managers to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. It will also be used to inform staff and contractor training.

This report will inform our quarterly Lessons Learnt Clinic and enable closer monitoring of compliance with the complaint handling code of the Housing Ombudsman service.

4.	Relevant issues and implications
4.1	<p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>This report contributes to avoiding a finding of maladministration or the potential for the issue of a complaints failure notice by the Housing Ombudsman Service, which could trigger a regulatory enquiry.</p>
4.2	<p>Policy implications</p> <p>This report meets the requirements of the Rugby Borough Council Customer Feedback Policy which requires the reporting of learning on complaints.</p>
4.3	<p>Reference to the RSH regulatory framework/Legislation and the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.</p> <p>This report assists compliance with the relevant consumer standard of the Regulator of Social Housing during 2023/24, the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard which requires that providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint. • Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services. Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints. Providers shall accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on a tenant's/tenants' behalf. <p>From 1 April 2024 the new consumer standard, The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard comes into effect which requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple and accessible. • Registered providers must publicise their complaints process and what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled. • Registered providers must provide tenants with information about the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services.

The production of this report and quarterly reports in 2024/25 will assist compliance with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard requires us to report on satisfaction with complaints handling (see 5.3) complaint volumes and complaints responded to with the Complaints Handling Code timescales. This report will facilitate those reports.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code came into effect from January 2021. The code requires member organisations to comply with the code, and the Housing Ombudsman has new powers to serve a complaints failure notice where there is non-compliance.

From 1 April 2024 the Complaints Handling Code has become statutory, this means that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. In addition to submitting a Complaints Annual Report for 2023/24 we will also submit, as required, a self-assessment of our compliance with the complaints handling code.

For 2023/24 we will assess our compliance against the Complaints Handling Code 2022, in future years we will assess our compliance against the Complaints Handling Code that takes effect from 1 April 2024.

For information, please find attached a quick reference to the changes.

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Code-Changes-FINAL.pdf>

5 Complaint Report 2023/24

5.1 Complaint Volumes 2023/24

Number of complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	30 (30%)	34 (53%)	34 (29%)	32 (28%)
Stage 2*	2 (50%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	4 (75%)
Ombudsman			1	

% of complaints responded to within the timescales required by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (10 working days) is indicated in ()

In the year 2023/24 35% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 10 working day timescale set out in the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

However, 58% of our complaints were handled within the 15 day response set out in the Rugby Borough Council Customer Feedback Policy.

In 2024/25 we will be changing the response time set out in our Customer Feedback Policy and adopting a 10 day response time in line with the Complaint Handling Code of the Housing Ombudsman service. In practice, all investigators and responders for landlord complaints are working towards a 10 day response time and this is evidenced through our suite of standard letters.

*Stage 2 complaints are recorded in the Q where the Stage 2 process commenced.

Number of complaints at Stage 1 per 1000 tenants in 2023/24 is 37

5.2 Reasons for Complaint

Complaint Type (Stage 1)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Responsive repairs	8	13	5	6
Damp & Mould	1	3	7	3
Customer service, service failure	1			2
Customer service, attitude of staff	1		1	3
Cleaning & gardening	2	5	4	1
Planned works/Asset inc Gas & Elec	3	5	3	5
Anti-Social Behaviour handling.	5	2	2	
Communication	1	2	2	2
Rent Account	4	3	2	3
Application for housing	1	1	7	5
Garages	2		1	1
Misc/Drainage/Dropped Kerb	1			1

Complaint Type (Stage 2)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Responsive repairs	1	1		2
Damp & Mould			1	1
Customer Service (Service Failure)				
Gas repairs/Contractor				
Customer service, attitude of staff				1
Misc (Estate Mgt)	1			
Application for housing			1	

5.3 Satisfaction with the complaint process

In October 2023 as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard Rugby Borough Council commenced its Tenants Survey. This was a census survey of 3343 tenants that was conducted by post. Our response rate was 34.1%.

The survey identified 41.5% of our tenants were satisfied with the way that Rugby Borough Council handles complaints, and we intend to deliver a number of actions in 2024/25 to increase satisfaction with our complaint handling including:

- The provision of information about our complaints policy and process in our Tenants' Newsletter July 2024 (and all future newsletters)
- Focus group and telephone surveys of tenants who have complained during 2023/24 to take place in May/June 2024 so that we increase our understanding of how tenants receive our complaints handling service and identify ways we can improve.
- Review our suite of standard letters.
- Training for investigating and responding officers in June 2024 to improve the quality of our complaint handling, in particular compliance with the response times required by the Complaint Handling Code, consistent use

of standard letters in responding to complaints and the quality of our responses.

- Establishment in 2023/24 of our Lessons Learnt Clinic which meets quarterly to scrutinise complaints and serious incidents.

5.4 **Compensation**

During 2023/24 there were 9 settled compensation claims amounting to the sum of £26,659.

Not all compensation settlements were associated with complaints.

5.5 **Learning from complaints**

The Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to demonstrate learning and continuous improvement from complaints, ensuring intelligence from complaints drives change and enables the resident's voice to be heard.

The code sets out:

For boards or equivalent governance, the Code supports culture setting and intelligence for assurance exercises, using complaint data alongside other management information on stock, services and customer feedback to provide insight into their organisation. It is important for governance to understand the complaints their organisations are receiving and the impact of their complaint handling on residents.

For chief executives and senior managers, the Code supports learning from complaints and promotes the open and transparent use of information to assess performance and risks.

The code requires reporting to residents, staff, leadership team and elected members to ensure that a culture of learning from complaints is truly embedded. An explicit requirement of the self-assessment is to demonstrate how we share learning with our elected members and tenants.

5.6

2023/24 Learning

Learning	Action Required
Inconsistent use of our standard letters for responses.	<p>Training for those responding to complaints is being organised for June 2024 and will be mandatory.</p> <p>We will review our suite of standard letters May 2024.</p>
Poor compliance with the timescales of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.	<p>As above.</p> <p>In 2024/25 quarterly complaints reports and monitoring by the Lessons Learnt Clinic will monitor compliance more effectively and in a timely way.</p> <p>In 2024/25 Rugby Borough Council will update its Customer Feedback Policy and the Council will adopt a 10-working day timescale in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, this will be clearer for responders. The Policy currently states a response must be provided in 15 days.</p> <p>It has been made clear to landlord service complaint investigators and responders through training that our response time is 10 working days, and we are robustly monitoring compliance with that timescale.</p>
A number of the complainants referenced having a disability or additional needs.	We will recognise, respond to and record additional needs or disabilities and ensure our responses and actions arising contain any appropriate reasonable adjustments.

Some poor-quality responses, not summarising the complaint effectively and not addressing the issues (although this may in some instances have been done informally, on the phone)	Training for those investigating responding to complaints has been delivered in June 2024 and was mandatory or all investigators and responders.
Poor record keeping and use of the Complaints System	<p>The training in June 2024 will focus on the Complaint Handling Code of the Housing Ombudsman, timescales, use of standard letters and quality responses.</p> <p>Our Complaints System is being updated and the updated version will</p> <p>provide a better experience for the user.</p>
Not sufficient evidence recorded of relevant teams being deployed, i.e. env health for noise nuisance.	Training will be provided on tackling ASB and the value of a whole council response.
Poor communication was a theme through many complaints, especially in relation to responsive repairs, tenants' complaints were exacerbated by difficulties in reaching staff to report to/talk to.	We have increased our team of schedulers (in the Repairs Team) and had a significant upgrade to our telephone systems. We will monitor this in 2024/25 and expect to see improvements.