

South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) Board response to the Complaint Handling Code self-assessment and annual report on complaints

June 2024

SYHA's stated purpose is "For our customers to settle at home, live well and realise their potential. We want people's experience with us to be a joy and we plan to be here for the long term".

In order to deliver on our purpose, as a Board, it is important for us to receive information about the organisation's performance and to hear directly from customers and staff. We receive regular performance information reporting against key performance indicators, we hear directly from the Customer Scrutiny Panel on their activities, we have two customer Board members and we take other opportunities to meet customers and staff directly.

This year SYHA hosted a "Meet the Ombudsman" event which was well attended by customers and some of the Board, we have been out and about touring general needs homes and supported services, as well as inviting customers into the Board room to talk about their experiences of SYHA as a landlord and service provider.

We have reviewed the annual complaints report, including the self-assessment of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Board considers that complaints are not only a key performance indicator, but provide invaluable insight into how we are doing and the opportunity to use learning outcomes to improve future performance.

Board consider that it is important to triangulate data from a variety of sources, including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. One key measure is the number of complaints relative to the size of landlord. We consider that 46.8 complaints per 1000 homes is a significant number, but we are pleased that customers have a wide range of opportunities and are comfortable in reporting their concerns to us.

Board is pleased to receive a self-assessment confirming compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and note the planned work throughout the organisation to embed a positive complaints culture. Associated with the self-assessment is an action plan which will be progressed during the year and progress will be reported to the Board both via direct reporting and via the efforts of the appointed Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

During the year there has been a lot of activity to ensure that we provide the best possible complaint handling service to our customers and continuously seek ways to improve our performance. Some of the highlights include:

- Customer scrutiny panel investigations into service charges and lettable voids.
- Review and update of the SYHA Complaints Policy.
- An external review of repairs and maintenance was commissioned to identify areas of good practice, areas for improvement, value for money and

to provide third party insight into sector best practice from which SYHA can learn.

- Due to poor performance of an existing gas contractor, a new contractor was appointed in March 2023, reducing the number of related complaints by over 60%.
- Specific staff training has taken place to ensure a consistent approach to complaint handling and to support complaint owners to resolve as many complaints as possible at stage 1. It is pleasing to see a reduction from 29 stage 2 complaint reviews in the previous year to 18 stage 2 reviews this year.
- A 100% stock condition survey has been commissioned to ensure that we hold the most accurate, up to date information possible about our homes, which will feed into our stock investment plan and help us proactively maintain safe, secure and decent quality homes.
- In line with the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code to appoint a Board member to the role of Member Responsible for Complaints, one of our customer Board members has been appointed to the role. They have been working directly with complaints handling colleagues to fully understand the processes, customer issues, organisational challenges and to provide a direct line of reporting back to Board.

Complaints remain a vital piece of our performance monitoring framework to ensure that opportunities for continuous improvement are identified and the voice of the customer is listened to and included in the Board's decision-making processes.

Board will continue to monitor progress against improvements identified during the self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, and have requested a six-months' follow up review of performance. In particular, we will be looking to assess how effectively the complaints culture which we are promoting has been embedded.

Matthew Harrison (Chair)

On behalf of the Board of South Yorkshire Housing Association

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