

**Lincolnshire Housing Partnership**

Annual Complaints Assurance Report 2024/25

**Introduction**

1. Focussing particularly on our Corporate Values of Customer First, Listen, Act & Learn and Together, this report provides the annual review of the Complaints Service, detailing what has changed, what we have learnt, how we are responding to lessons learnt and the trends and themes that have arisen with the detail regarding how these are being addressed.

**Updates**

1. In June 2024, we welcomed new members to our customer complaint panel. Following the introduction of the updated statutory complaints handling code, the format of the meetings shifted to focus on performance figures against KPI’s, performance alongside Housemark data, discussion on trends and themes from complaints, learning and insight and topics for the panel to share with other customers through our magazine.
2. In Q1, our quarterly customer magazine was updated to include a standing item regarding complaints communications to our customers. This comprises of our performance, trends and themes, and an article summarising the discussion held at the panel meeting that is co-written with the panel members and Customer Experience Manager.
3. A second panel meeting in October 2024 discussion centred around LHP’s repairs service, with recommendations feeding into the consultation happening at the time. There was also discussion around the service requests vs complaints and the panel updated customers via the magazine on the ways that they could make a complaint.
4. The Customer Experience Manager is a part of a customer experience/complaints networking group that shares queries and best practice across the sector.
5. This year LHP contributed how our stage 2 complaints are assigned, how we share learning with customers and the work our complaints panel undertakes.
6. The panel meeting in Q3 focussed on the work taking place to address complaints backlogs regarding repairs. The panel also offered assurance to customers around how complaint responses are communicated and how LHP will always consider customer communication preferences such as large print, translation to other languages and adjustments where interpreters or recordings of outcomes are provided for deaf and blind customers.
7. The panel were also updated on the work upcoming on how LHP will use customer insight and feedback to make improvement to services, with the Executive Director of Governance and Regulation attending the meeting to explain LHP’s journey to achieve a C1 for consumer standards.
8. Panel presentations have been shared with the member for complaints throughout the year in supplement to the usual quarterly performance reporting to ensure that the Board has an overview of complaints performance and actions.
9. Going forward for the next year the customer experience manager will be attending the quarterly leadership meeting to provide oversight and assurance on complaint handling compliance and customer feedback and insight. Actions from monthly business partner meetings for complaints will also be shared.

**Trends and Themes**

1. When complaints are received and logged through QL, they are classified by type to ensure that trends and themes can be analysed at each reporting stage.
2. Trends and themes are reported to CLT and ELT as well as being utilised in the complaint review meetings with the complaints panel and member for complaints to highlight any areas for improvement.
3. They are used to report learning to customers in the magazine and website, as well as in our annual reporting.
4. The top three themes from the past year are:

* **38% Quality of service** – this is where there may be multiple issues such as lack of communication, progress, issues/repairs not resolved at first attempt etc.
* **18% Lack of progress** – where works/issues have been reported but nothing has happened to resolve.
* **13% Work not completed** – although a lower percentage than above, customers routinely cite this as a part of their complaint when chasing initial or follow on repairs

1. One of the main issues of complaint is where customers are waiting longer than usual for repairs to take place due to repairs resources. In recent months a funding package has been approved by the board and 18 new engineers will join the repairs team, to be deployed into the affected areas.

**Learning**

1. All learning outcomes are added to Pentana, our performance software and tracked until they are delivered in the same way as Internal Audit Actions are monitored.
2. Following complaint feedback regarding the tone of our gas safety reminder letters, a review was undertaken, seeking advice from legal resources to ensure accuracy of statutory requirements. Finally, letters were reviewed for their detail and tone by our customer scrutiny panel, who agreed a final version that required a harder tone due to the serious nature of landlord gas safety compliance.
3. Complaints from prospective customers on the housing register who required adapted homes let us know they were struggling to match with suitable properties. Our allocations team has been working with our partners at Occupational Therapy to review prospective homes whilst empty to pre-approve adaptations, if possible, to reduce the change of disabled customers being skipped in the queue when bidding.

**Performance**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Target** | **2023/24** | **Target** | **2024/25** |
| **Total Complaints received** | Complaints per 1000 properties (3.83) | 2.91 (356) | Complaints per 1000 properties (3.13) | 2.75 (370 complaints) |
| **% responded in target** | 98.6% | 98.6% | 98.6% | 76.6% |
| **Average days to respond** | 10 | 10.6 | 10 | 15.5 |
| **Satisfaction – handling** | 65.6% | 41.77% | 55% | 46.67% |
| **Satisfaction - outcome** | 63.4% | 36.36% | 55% | 31.82% |

1. Communications to customers via our complaints panel recommendation has encouraged customers to let us know when they have an issue, as such, our complaints have risen slightly.
2. In line with the update to the Handling Code, service request type issues were logged via QL. These type of requests are either dealt with at first point of contact, or by team leaders within 5 working days of reporting. If not resolved or where customers indicate they wish to continue with a complaint, they are logged at stage 1.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **LHP 24/25** | **Housemark Median** |
| **Handling Satisfaction** | 46.67% | 46.8% |
| **Outcome Satisfaction** | 31.82% | 42.3% |

1. Customer satisfaction on complaint handling rose by 6% and are in line with the Housemark median scores. This is encouraging following lunch and learn sessions with investigating officers and increased communication across the business following complaints panel meetings.
2. Complaint outcome score rose slightly, although remain lower than the median. Whilst this is disappointing, it acknowledges the feedback we have received on the timescales for our repairs service.
3. Qualitative feedback on surveys will be used in the monthly BP meetings to drive further improvements on service delivery and will continue to be shared in the complaint panel meetings to seek their recommendations.
4. Satisfaction scores for 24/25 against key complaints surveying metrics for comparison with 23/24 can be seen below.

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**Trend Analysis**

Age

1. EDI analysis of 22/23 & 23/24 complainants indicated a 36% drop in customers 65+ accessing the complaints process. Whilst there isn’t sufficient data to understand why this is happening, the complaint panel shared an update to all customers via the customer magazine on how to access the complaints process and what customers can expect.
2. The panel has also recommended a re-design and update of the complaint handbook that was previously sent to all customers homes with the introduction of the handling code. This is to ensure that customer who may be in the 65+ demographic and who aren’t accessing LHP via digital methods, have guidance on accessing the process.

**Ombudsman Determinations**

1. The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) decide which complaints qualify to be investigated as a case by them. Below are determinations have received from the Ombudsman in 2024/25:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Determination Date** | **Investigation remit** | **Outcome** | **Orders** | **Comment** |
| July 2024 | Landlords handling of D&M reports, bathroom leak, roof, kitchen and windows replacement. | In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was service failure in respect of the landlords handling of residents report of D&M. Maladministration of landlords handling of residents report of bathroom leak. Service failure in landlords’ response to residents requests for replacement roof, kitchen and windows. No maladministration found in associated complaint handling. | Landlord to pay total of £200 compensation, written apology regarding poor communication and failing to manage expectations regarding roof and window replacements. | Letter of apology and compensation offer sent within four-week deadline. Copy provided to the HOS as evidence of compliance of case determination. |
| December 2024 | Landlords staff conduct during repair for radiator leak. Damage caused by the leak and the associated complaint. | In accordance with paragraph 52 of the HOS, there was service failure in handling of staff conduct report. Maladministration in landlords handling of residents reports of damage caused by the leak. Maladministration with associated complaint. | Senior manager to apologise to resident in writing and pay £500 compensation. Ordered to contact customer to arrange inspection of leak to make good any repairs. | Letter of apology and compensation offer sent to former resident within four-week deadline. Customer refused access to the property and sent abusive letters in response. Copy provided to the HOS as evidence of compliance of case determination. |
| February 2025 | Landlords handling of repairs to bathroom and conduct of LHP’s contractors. The handling of subsequent complaint and compensation amount offered. | In accordance with paragraph 53 of the HOS, there service failure by landlord in handling of residents reports of repairs. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the HOS, there was maladministration in the landlords complaint handling. | Written apology within 4 weeks. Offering compensation of £200 plus appropriate offer for personal items damaged. | Letter of apology and compensation offer sent to former resident within four-week deadline. Copy provided to the HOS as evidence of compliance of case determination. |
| March 2025 | The handling of customers RTB application and handling of subsequent complaint. | In accordance with paragraph 53b of the scheme, the landlord offered reasonable redress in relation to its handling of RTB application. In accordance of paragraph 52 of the scheme, there was service failure by the landlord in its complaint handling. | Pay resident £50 for minor failure in its complaint handling and re-offer the £250 compensation that was previously offered at stage 2. | Letter of apology and compensation offer sent to former resident within four-week deadline. Copy provided to the HOS as evidence of compliance of case determination. |

**Learning from Complaints**

1. The complaints process is used as a tool to inform where learning and service improvements can be made. Below are learning points that have come from complaint investigation and scrutiny by the customer complaint panel:

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| **Complaint** | **Learning** | **Comment** |
| Customers let us know they were unhappy with how we handled external repairs. | If external repairs require scaffolding, this will be communicated to customers via the planning team and estimated dates will be provided. | Planning team updated with new scripting to advise and guide customers who will have supplementary attendance by contractors prior to external work. |
| Customers advised that our mutual exchange process isn’t working efficiently. | A working group was formed to discuss and update the process. | The group assessed the process against current best practice and consumer standards and updated the policy and process. |
| Customers (private owners) living in our communities felt LHP did not communicate planned works effectively. | We needed to prioritise communicating to all members of our communities, not just the customers in our homes. | Engagement days with our partnering contractors and pre-installation meetings meant LHP could reach more people that live in our communities. |
| Customers who had had investment works completed in their homes did not know when snagging repairs would be completed. | Snagging is often picked up on the handover process from Fortem to LHP and customers need to know what these are and when they can expect them to be done. | Setting expectations with Fortem to ensure that snagging checklists are produced and shared with our customers. These are saved internally so if customers contact LHP we can assist. These repairs should be completed within 10 working days of the handover. |
| Complaints about the repairs service in general. Lack of communication, repairs timescales, quality of work. | The repairs service needs to be reviewed, alongside the policies and processes to ensure our customers are receiving the repairs service they expect. | This is part of an on-going Repairs Stabilisation programme, that is working with colleague and customer feedback to shape the service and make it more efficient. |

**Conclusion**

1. Customer Experience Team will continue to manage the complaints process and support, develop and guide colleagues across the business to influence a customer first service and ensure accountability and compliance with the code.
2. Through consistent review and challenge we believe that we can continue to improve our customers’ experience and achieve improved satisfaction responses. With the introduction of insight and change teams, this will be a collaborative approach using customer insight to workshop improvements.