



## **Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for year ending December 2024**

### **Introduction**

Harrison Housing is a small Almshouse and Registered Provider. We own and manage 151 homes across London and Essex. We encourage residents to feedback to us about service improvements through several methods:

- Through regular resident events, such as coffee mornings, as well as annual events where residents can meet the leadership team and Trustees (i.e. summer and Christmas events).
- We also encourage residents to contact their Scheme Manager in person or through email/letter.
- Regular visits by the Housing Manager provide an opportunity for residents to give feedback, in both more formal resident meetings and one to one.
- We also have a visitor service that helps to support residents in many ways, including helping to improve the standards of service provided to residents.
- In April 2024 we worked with Acuity to run our first annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSM).
- In May 2024 we updated our Complaints Policy to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaints Handling code, effective from April 2024. This policy is available on our website and in hard copy via scheme managers.

From April 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service requires landlords to produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. This includes any complaints we have received in the year and what actions we have taken in response to them.

Our new Complaints Policy outlines our approach to dealing with complaints and importantly, helps us improve and learn from complaints where we can. We also use the feedback from our TSM to make improvements to services.

### **Annual Self-Assessment**

The new Complaints Handling Code came into effect from 1st April 2024, and in preparation we undertook a full review of our Complaints Policy to ensure compliance with the new code. The annual self-assessment of the Complaints Handling Code can be viewed on our website.

The Harrison Housing Leadership Team was completely replaced over the period September 2023 to May 2024, and throughout 2024 that Leadership Team has been working to improve service delivery, including our handling of complaints.

### **Complaints Handling Performance 2024**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Complaints received	8	0	2	0
Resolved at Stage 1	4	0	1	0
Escalated to Stage 2	4	0	1	0
Escalated to Housing Ombudsman	1	0	0	0

**The table shows the number of complaints each quarter. Escalation may have happened in a later quarter, but it is counted in the quarter the complaint originated.**

We received 10 complaints during the 12 months to December 2024. Five complaints were resolved at Stage 1, with five complaints escalating to Stage 2. One complaint was escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

#### ***Stage 1***

The bulk of complaints came in during Quarter 1 and reflected a backlog of dissatisfaction with issues which had arisen in the previous two years. The first seven of these complaints were received between 3 January 2024 and 24 February 2024. They came from two residents in the same scheme. Complaints were about alleged ASB from each other, in addition to a complaint about our response to those allegations. Two of these complaints were not initially acknowledged as separate complaints as one was out of time and the other was a complaint about the complaints process. However, all the issues raised by this complainant were

later considered as part of a wider Stage 2 complaint hearing. The eighth complaint in quarter 1 was a standalone ASB complaint from a different scheme and was subsequently investigated under our ASB policy.

In Quarter 3 we received two complaints which were primarily about our repairs service. One of these complaints also covered quality of communication and staff conduct.

The standalone ASB complaint was not upheld at stage 1 and was not escalated.

### ***Stage 2***

Five complaints overall escalated to Stage 2. Three of these complaints were from the same resident and were addressed in a single Stage 2 hearing. This picked up some wider historic issues that had not formally been logged as complaints. Compensation of £200 was offered for delays to historical repairs being completed and further investigations were carried out linked to current issues.

The second complainant from this scheme, that escalated the complaint to Stage 2, was not upheld.

The final complaint to be escalated to stage 2 (in quarter 3) was partially upheld and compensation offered in respect of communications. The same resident was also refunded the weekly maintenance charges (almshouse equivalent of rent) for a period when decanted to another flat for repairs to be carried out.

Our scheme managers have indicated that residents' concerns are often addressed immediately due to them being on-site on a regular basis and do not turn into complaints. We are looking for a way to track these more effectively in the future.

Through 2024 our Interim Housing Manager has been able to visit schemes regularly, to hear feedback from residents and improve the visibility of senior leaders. Under the new management the Asset Management Team has been able to resolve a significant number of repair and cyclical maintenance issues which we expect will reduce complaints about repairs in future e.g. boiler replacements and roof repairs.

## **Housing Ombudsman Findings and Reports**

A person making a complaint can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman after they have completed Stage Two of Harrison Housing's complaints process and remain dissatisfied. They can also refer earlier if they are dissatisfied with our complaints handling process at an earlier stage.

During the 12 months to December 2024 one complaint was escalated to the Housing Ombudsman (on 14 June 2024) and to date they have not issued Harrison Housing with any non-compliance findings with the code.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint self-assessment has been completed in full.

## **Service Improvements and Learning**

In September 2024 the leadership team and Trustees met and discussed the Resident Improvement Plan based on the results of the TSM and from learning from prior complaints.

In September 2024 all staff also received a briefing and training session on the Harrison Housing Complaints Policy. This was made relevant both to staff in public facing roles, and those in more "back-office" roles. Staff input was encouraged at this session and subsequently all staff were asked to acknowledge they had read and understood our policy.

We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve services for our residents. As part of our commitment to this, complaints, learning and progress is a regular section of the Housing Management Report that Trustees receive at every quarterly meeting, with an annual report after our year end in December.

We track complaints actions and learning using an internal tracker.

From the TSM report Acuity made three recommendations for service improvements. These are backed up by the complaints that were received through 2023 and earlier in 2024:

- Improve complaints handling,
- Improve repairs service and communications around repairs (including follow up on mould reports),
- Improve communications and customer services – consult more and show greater empathy.

As mentioned there has been a new Leadership Team in place for most of 2024 and improvements have been made in those three key areas:

### Complaints Handling

- New policy in place, Ombudsman compliant and shared with residents.
- Staff training has taken place and there are plans for further regular training.
- First two complaints under the new policy have been processed. The first is closed with the resident saying they will not be taking any further action.
- Second complaint under new policy has been processed at Stage 1. This was not escalated to Stage 2.
- An improved complaints tracker with built-in alerts is now in use.

### Repairs Service (and follow up on mould reports)

- All residents that reported mould in the TSM were visited and their issues resolved or being resolved.
- Staff have received training about how to identify mould, how to help residents who report mould and the escalation system in place.
- Residents are clear that their Scheme Manager books day to day repairs (explained via newsletter) and staff changes at head office have improved the service.
- A repairs standard guide was sent in November. This made clear what items within residents' homes are a landlord responsibility and what items are residents' responsibility.
- Property stock condition surveys almost complete (4 flats still to visit), works have been done where possible, urgent major works have been booked or completed.

### Communications and customer services

- Housing Management visits are more frequent leading to improved visibility.
- Staff changes have improved the service standard.
- Newsletters published in August and December 2024, and they will now be published at least 3 times per year.
- The CEO is also periodically visiting schemes to talk to residents.
- A service standard guide that makes it clear what timescale residents can expect a response was published in November.

### **Board Response**

Our Vice-Chair Sue Hockett is our lead on Complaints (the Responsible Member). She has fed back on our report on 2024 complaints which was shared with the Board of Trustees on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The following summarises the Trustees response to that report.

*The Board of Trustees is satisfied that the approach to complaint handling remains a high priority for the Leadership Team and that we are compliant with the Complaint Handling Code, evidenced in the self-assessment and Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report.*

*During the next 12 months we expect to see the service improvement plan that was agreed in September 2024 to be actioned and further learning outcomes from any complaints or feedback received from residents, be it formal or informal.*

*The board also supports the annual TSM report which helps to highlight any key themes where residents may be dissatisfied with services.*