

FEEDBACK RECEIVED IN HOUSING 2015-16

Item for Decision <input type="checkbox"/>	Item for Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Item for Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide headline information on the number of complaints, and compliments received within the Housing Service in 2015-16, with a comparison to 2014-15

**2. REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report gives SMT an overview of the performance of the Housing Service during 2015-16 in responding to complaints.
- 2.2 Complaints are recognised as a valuable tool in helping officers to understand the concerns of tenants in the delivery of Services and have an important role in supporting the improvement of those Services.
- 2.3 The number of complaints and members enquiries received by the council has increased in the last three years. Although this can be seen as a positive indication of how accessible our complaints process is, the trend does need to be reversed.

**3. DETAILS**

- 3.1 Complaints, including Housing Ombudsman (HO) complaints are monitored by the Business Development team. The data collected is used to provide the performance information in this report broken down by department.

Performance for the number of complaints dealt with in time and the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2.

- 3.2 The council's formal complaints procedure, which does not cover complaints subject to a statutory procedure, has two stages with the following response timescales:
- Stage 1 within 10 working days; and
  - Stage 2 within 10 working days.

**4. HOUSING COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN 2015-16**

4.1 The Housing Service received a total of 209 Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, compared to 192 in 2014-15.

4.2 A total of 193 Stage 1 complaints were received, a 10.3% increase over 2014-15 when 175 Stage 1 complaints were received.

	2015-16	2014-15	Change
Repairs and Investment	155	153	+1.4%
Housing Management	29	18	+61%
Housing Choices	8	4	+100%
HRA Business Support Team	1	0	+100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>+10.3%</b>

4.3 A total of 16 complaints progressed to Stage 2 across all housing departments, a decrease of 5.9% on 2014-15 when 17 Stage 2 complaints were received. The reduction in the number of escalated complaints demonstrates the benefit of providing a comprehensive response at Stage 1.

	2015-16	2013/14	Change
Repairs and Investment	14	15	-6.6%
Housing Management	2	2	0%
Housing Choices	0	0	-
HRA Business Support Team	0	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>-5.9%</b>

4.4 It took the Housing Service an average of 11 working days to respond to complaints in 2015-16, and responded to 59.9% of Stage 1 complaints on time. There are, however, a number of complaints (24 at the time of writing) that have not been responded to yet, so this figure will increase. Work is underway to resolve these complaints.

Based on performance at the time of writing, this represents an increase in performance from 2014-15, where complaints were investigated in an average of 14 days, and 56.3% of stage 1 complaints were responded to in time.

87.5% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 10 days, which is a significant improvement from 2014-15 where no stage 2 complaints were responded to in time.

<b>% responded to in time</b>						
	2015-16		2014-15		Change	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
R&I	34.5%	0%	52.5%	0%	-18%	0%
HM	82.7%	100%	66.6%	0%	+16.1%	+100%
HC	62.5%	-	50%	-	+12.5%	-
HRA	0%	-	-	-	0%	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.9%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>56.3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>-3.6%</b>	<b>+87.5%</b>

4.5 The reduction in volume and time taken to respond to complaints, coupled with the reduction in stage 2 complaints suggests that the Housing service is improving in both its day to day function, and also in the way it deals with complaints. Performance suggests that complaints are being dealt with quicker, and more robust responses are being provided which satisfies the complaint for the tenant.

4.6 It is recognised within the service that complaints are typically monitored “end to end” – i.e. from the date the complaint is received to the date a letter is sent to the complainant by the Business Development Team.

However, in the majority of cases, complaints can be (and often are) resolved within a few days following the receipt of the complaint by way of a phone call to the tenant which resolves the complaint. There might be a delay between this phone call and sending the letter which actually closes the complaint, which reflects badly on the number of days it takes us to resolve the complaint “end to end”.

4.7 The Housing Service receives approximately 75% of all complaints received by the council, and therefore are the “biggest customer” to the Business Development Team. Given this information, a recommendation has been made to look at the way a complaint is classed as being resolved.

**5. Reasons and Timing of Complaints**

5.1 The areas that customers complained about the most, at Stage 1 are:

Complaint Category	Number	% of total received
<b>Delays in Repairs</b>	75	39%
<b>Failure to Provide a Service</b>	38	20%
<b>Conduct of Staff</b>	13	7%
<b>Unhappy with Policy</b>	10	5%
<b>Poor Communications</b>	8	4%

Top complaint categories for each service area are:

- Housing Repairs – Delays in undertaking work
- Housing Management – Condition of council property
- Housing Choices – Choice based lettings banding
- HRA Business Support Team – Unhappy with policy

5.2 Service area’s received the highest and lowest number of complaints as follows;

	Highest	Lowest
<b>Repairs and Investment</b>	30 (Feb 2016)	12 (Mar 2016)
<b>Housing Management</b>	11 (Aug 2015)	3 (Dec 2015)
<b>Housing Choices</b>	12 (May 2015)	0 (Apr 2015)
<b>HRA BST</b>	1 (Sept 2015)	0 (Various)

Generally, more complaints are received across the service between June and October 2015.

## 6. Compensation Claims

6.1 Due to staffing and process changes within the Housing Service and the Business Development Team, the recording and management of compensation claims has been poor, especially between April 2015 and October 2015. Therefore some claims received may not have been logged, and others may not have been updated when a decision or payment has been made.

6.2 Top 5 reasons for compensation claims are:

	2015-16		2014-15		Change	
	Upheld	£ Paid	Upheld	£ Paid	Upheld	£ Paid
No Heating or Hot Water	5	£495	22	£820	27	£1,315
Damage by Leak	4	£253	16	£3,058	20	£3,311
Poor Workmanship	2	£580	6	£2,110	8	£2,690
Missed Appointment	0	£0	6	£95	6	£95
Following a Complaint	0	£0	4	£628	4	£628
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>£1,328</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>£6,711</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>£8,039</b>

- The total number of claims received in 2015-16 was 21 and 9 claimants received compensation as a result of their claim (43%). The total amount of compensation paid was £1,653, making the average amount paid per claim £184.
- 72 claims were received in 2014-15. Compared to 2015-16, this is a reduction of 71%. 59 claimants (82%) received compensation as part of their claim. The total amount of compensation paid was £9,218, making the average amount paid per claim £156.24
- The reduction in compensation claims in 2015-16 would further suggest that the day to day management of the Housing Service has improved.
- The categories used to log compensation claims, coupled with the poor record keeping mean that it is difficult to determine whether any claims were received (or payments made) outside of the compensation policy.
- In addition, there is a discrepancy in the total amounts paid according to the compensation database, and total spend reported by Exchequer.

## 7. Compliments

7.1 41 compliments were received on departmental Service delivery, compared to 68 in 2014-15.

	2015-16	2014-15	Change
Repairs and Investment	28	39	-28.2%
Housing Management	6	15	-60%
Housing Choices	6	14	-57.1%
HRA Business Support Team	1	0	-100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>-39.7%</b>

7.2 It is recognised that more work needs to be done to capture compliments. Many compliments are informal and verbal in nature and so are not recorded. They are however an important source of feedback about the Services we provide and the staff who deliver them. If recorded and the stories they tell published internally, they can offer a positive perspective on the work of staff and their managers.

The HRA Business Support Team will work with the Business Development Team in order to improve this in Quarter 2 of 2015-16.

## 8. Summary

8.1 The introduction of Stage 1 complaints being investigated by a Team Manager has improved the quality of complaint responses, leading to a reduction in the number of stage 2 complaints.

However, whilst there may be learning taken from complaints, this is currently not captured anywhere either within the Housing Service or corporately. There is also no way of monitoring customer satisfaction.

8.2 There needs to be an improvement in the communication with the Business Development Team, both on sending holder letters out, and working with them to identify trends or areas that need to be addressed.

8.3 As a result of complaints received, the following should be shared with tenants;

1. There have been fewer missed appointment complaints and compensation claims. This is expected to be further reduced as SMS messaging is developed within OneServe.
2. Complaints received in the Repairs Team are primarily to do with delays in undertaking routine and batched work. We have reassigned our support contractor to do all of this work in the future, supported by the creation of a Minor Works team within the IRT
3. As a result of feedback from tenants who have complained about ASB, changes have been made to the process when closing a case off, meaning that the complainant is able to have more of a say as to whether the case is closed or not.
4. There have been less complaints received following works required after the allocation of a property.

8.4 The following areas continue to generate significant levels of complaints, and further action is recommended to address them;

1. Delays in undertaking repairs
  2. Condition of properties
  3. Allocation of properties
- 8.5 The following geographical areas continue to generate significant levels of complaint and team managers should consider whether this indicates any capacity/training issues regarding staffing in these areas;
1. Oakthorpe and Donisthorpe
  2. Greenhill
  3. Castle Donington

## 9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Service refocuses on achieving an average 10 day response deadline for all complaints (or makes effective use of holding extensions).
- 9.2 That communication with the Business Development Team be improved to more effectively manage the complaints process, and protocols be agreed with the BDT to avoid duplication currently happening.
- 9.3 That the changes in service policy/procedure already made in response to complaints be noted
- 9.4 That the information on the level of compensation claims paid be considered as part of the review of compensation policy and procedure currently underway.
- 9.5 That pop up events being organised by Resident Involvement team are focused on the geographical areas specified in point 8.5 above
- 9.6 That as part of the conclusion of every complaint the responsible officer shall complete a “summary of learning” statement which identifies any action to be taken as a result of the complaint, corrective action or any change of policy/procedure to be implemented, and this is stored within both the HRA Business Support Team and the Business Development Team.
- 9.7 That SMT give consideration to working with the Business Development Team to determine when a complaint has been resolved, in response to point 4.7 above.
- 9.8 That a record of authorisations for compensation payments be maintained by the HRA Business Support Team and that they monitor expenditure from the compensation budget across the service in monthly finance clinics.
- 9.9 As the compensation policy is currently in the process of being reviewed, it is recommended that SMT have this document to hand whilst reviewing and agreeing the policy.
- 9.10 SMT approve an investigation into the discrepancy between the amount of compensation reported as being paid on the database against the spend on the budget code. It is recommended that if approved, the investigation be undertaken by the HRA Business Support Team in conjunction with the Business Development Team in Quarter 2 of 2016-17
- 9.10 That a customer satisfaction survey be introduced to assess the views of tenants, in line with Housemark StarT guidelines.

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