

Complaints Performance and Learning

Item for Decision <input type="checkbox"/>	Item for Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Item for Information <input type="checkbox"/>
---	--	--

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide a report to SMT on Housing complaints performance and trends as at Quarter 2, and an update on learning from complaints in the period.

2. REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 From November 2015, following a request from the Head of Housing, weekly status reports on complaints and compensation cases are sent to SMT. Since then this has now evolved and includes case status by area, case status by officer, overall trend of cases and area trend of cases. This also now includes fluctuations on closed, new and re-opened cases on a weekly basis.
- 2.2 At the August 2016 SMT Meeting, the Head of Housing requested that a register be created to capture follow up actions and learning from complaints. This is an enhancement from the June 2016 SMT meeting, where a complaint learning form was discussed and subsequently developed.
- 2.3 In order to capture actions and learning in one place, an Access database was created by the HRA Business Support Team. The database allows for the capture of complaint actions and gives the option to set reminders in the diaries of responsible officers to ensure the actions are followed through. This potentially reduces the number of escalations of complaints (which usually happens when we fail to carry out an agreed action). Where a physical action is not required, i.e. undertake X repair by Y, the database allows the capture of learning actions using the same method and process. For Q2 there were two complaint actions saved on the database and these have been successfully followed up by the responsible officers.
- 2.4 Currently, the HRA Business Support Team are responsible for identifying actions with complaint responses sent by the service, and regularly liaise with the Business Development Team to ensure final versions of complaint responses are shared in order to capture the actions. Complaint learning logs are sent regularly to the Housing mailbox and the HRA Business Support Team update the Learnings and Follow-up database with any learning actions.
- 2.5 The database is currently being stored on the HRA Business Support H: Drive, but will be migrated on the new Intranet site when it is available.

3. ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS

Information from earlier years is not directly comparable due to changes in procedures. However, it is given below for information purposes;

- 3.1 In the first 2 quarters of 2016-17, the Housing Service received a total of 84 Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, compared to 113 in 2015-16 for the same period. This is a reduction of 25.66%
- 3.2 A total of 73 Stage 1 complaints were received in the first 2 quarters of 2016-17, a 29.12% decrease over 2015-16 when 103 Stage 1 complaints were received.

	2016-17	2015-16	Change
Asset Management Team	53	81	-34.56%
Housing Management	17	17	-
Housing Choices	3	4	-25%
HRA Business Support Team	0	1	-100%
Total	73	103	-29.12%

- 3.3 A total of 11 complaints progressed to Stage 2 across all housing departments, an increase of 10% on 2015-16 when 10 Stage 2 complaints were received.

	2016-17	2015-16	Change
Asset Management Team	6	9	-33.33%
Housing Management	5	1	+400%
Housing Choices	0	0	-
HRA Business Support Team	0	0	-
Total	11	10	+10%

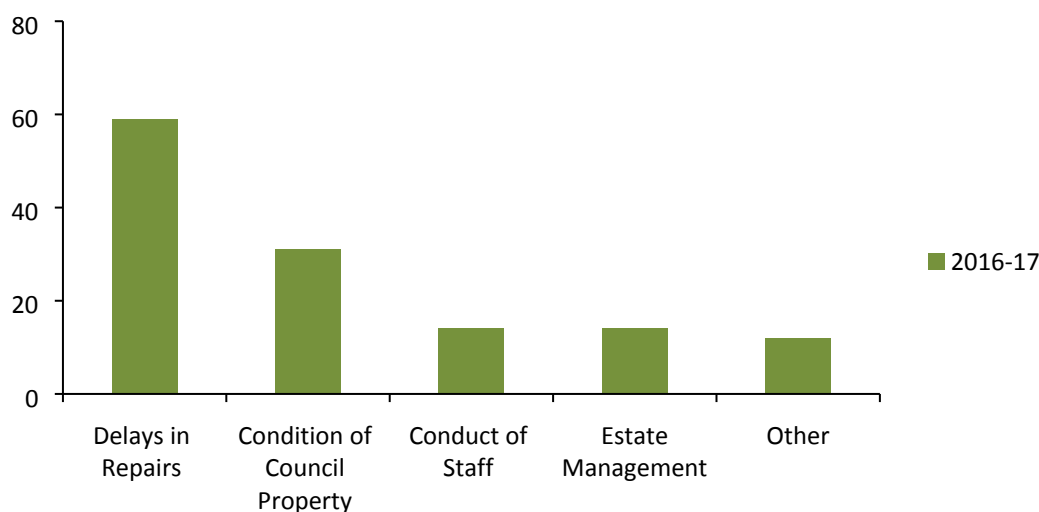
- 3.4 It took the Housing Service an average of 14 working days to respond to complaints in the first 2 quarters of 2016-17, and responded to 46.5% of Stage 1 complaints on time. This represents a slight improvement in performance compared to the same period of 2015-16 where the service also responded to complaints in an average of 14 days, and responded to 44.6% of Stage 1 complaints on time.
- 3.5 There was a backlog of largely overdue complaints from 2015-16 that needed to be responded to and in some circumstances these were prioritised over complaints received in 2016-17, and therefore this may account for not meeting the corporate response target. To put this into context, at the start of 2016-17, there were 24 overdue complaints from the previous financial year that were prioritised. Of these, only 1 remains open due to the case being ongoing and complex.
- 3.6 There are, however, a number of complaints (16 at the time of writing this report) that have not been responded to yet, so the figure for 2016-17 will increase. Work is underway to resolve these complaints.

- 3.7 50% of stage 2 complaints received in the first 2 quarters of 2016-17 were responded to within 10 days (4 out of 8), which is a significant improvement from 2015-16 where 10% (1 out of 10) stage 2 complaints were responded to in time.
- 3.8 The decrease in the number of complaints suggests that the Housing Service is improving in its day to day function. There have been a number of improvements made to the service recently, which may attribute to the 29% reduction in the number of complaints received.
- 3.9 However, one item of concern is the time taken to respond (currently an average of 4 days above the corporate target), and the increase in stage 2 complaints. However, the majority of stage 2 complaints received so far have been because the complainant isn't happy with the response, rather than a lack of promised action. This will need to be monitored closely over the remaining 2 quarters.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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. However, following further correspondence with the Business Development Team, a letter does still need to be sent to the complainant in order for the case to be closed.
- 3.12 Including the Housing Service, the Council has received 165 stage 1 and stage 2 complaints so far this financial year (84 for Housing and 81 for the rest of the council). Therefore Housing has received 50.90% of complaints across the entire council.

Compared to 2015-16, 207 stage 1 and stage 2 complaints were received (113 for Housing and 94 for the rest of the council). Therefore in 2015-16, Housing received 54.58% of complaints across the entire council. Again, this represents a slight improvement across both the service and the council.

- 3.13 The top 5 reasons for complaints received in the first 2 quarters of 2016-17 are as follows:

Complaints by Reason



This is broadly similar to both the first 2 quarters and the entire year of 2015-16.

- 3.14 There is no current way of monitoring satisfaction with complaints, as the survey was abandoned in 2014 when the Business Development Team was created. There is currently no appetite to monitor satisfaction corporately, so the HRA Business Support Team are in the process of designing a satisfaction survey that is sent electronically to tenants following closure of a complaint.
- 3.15 Whilst our data indicates a fall in complaints, Housemark have recently released an article off the back of their Customer Excellence Benchmarking exercise (which we participated in) that shows a rise in complaints across the public sector.
<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/business/tenancy/tenants/new-data-shows-rise-in-tenant-complaints/7016747.article>

4. ANALYSIS OF COMPLIMENTS

- 4.1 In terms of compliments, in the first 2 quarters of 2016-17, 27 compliments have been received, broken down as follows in comparison to 2015-16:

	2016-17	2015-16	Change
Asset Management Team	11	18	-38.8%
Housing Management	14	5	+180%
Housing Choices	1	6	-83.3%
HRA Business Support Team	1	1	-
Total	27	30	-10%

- 4.2 The majority of compliments are received in praise of the hard work and dedication that members of staff provide to our tenants.
- 4.3 We need to get better at recognising and recording compliments received. Business Development Team is currently responsible for recording this. Perhaps, colleagues need to be reminded that we have a corporate system in place that captures customer compliments and this can be captured by as simple as sending a copy of the compliment to the feedback@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

5. ANALYSIS OF COMPENSATION CLAIMS

- 5.1 In the past, the logging and recording of compensation claims has not been consistent. This has changed in 2016-17 and we are now able to provide some basic reporting in terms of claims received, but we are unable to provide a comparison.
- 5.2 There have been 36 claims logged to date for 2016/17, and £4,028 has been paid in compensation to tenants. The most paid was £579.85 (to a tenant who had an undetected burst pipe for over a year as a result of poor workmanship which resulted in a high water bill) and the least paid has been £10 to 6 tenants who have all suffered missed appointments

5.3 The breakdown is as follows:

Categories	Number of Claims	£ Paid per Category	Avg £ Per Claim
Damage Caused by Leak	9	£1,471	£163
Damage Caused by Contractor	1	£300	£300
General Compensation	11	£1,172	£107
No Heating and Hot Water	4	£475	£119
Damage Caused by Operative	2	£260	£130
Missed Appointment	*7	£60	£10
Email From Maintenance Officer	1	£264	£264
Follow On From Complaint	1	£26	£26
Total	36	£4,028	£112

*A compensation claim for missed appointment was successfully challenged. We have proven that our operative has attended the appointment based on what was agreed with the tenant prior to attendance.

6. LEARNINGS PILOT

- 6.1 In June's SMT Meeting, it was discussed and agreed that the Housing Service would pilot a learning programme, starting with one service (later agreed as Housing Management) and then reviewing the situation before deciding whether to roll out the learning log to other service areas.
- 6.2 Since the pilot started, Housing Management have received 12 complaints. Of those 12, 2 (17%) have resulted in a learning log being completed and formal learning identified to reduce or stop similar complaints being received in the future. There was also learning identified as a result of a complaint received within the Strategic Housing team, although this was outside of the pilot.
- 6.3 The following table summarises both the formal learning identified through the learning logs submitted and the "informal" learning identified by Strategic Housing:

	You Said	We Did
Housing Management	The information given to me when I signed for my tenancy was incorrect and resulted in me incurring a financial loss	Changed the information provided at tenancy sign up and trained staff accordingly
	You made a pre-arranged appointment with me but failed to attend even though I had made arrangements to be available for you	Changed the way we update our colleagues of where we are in the district and what we're doing, and whether we're going to meet our appointments or not
Housing Choices	You were unhappy with the way that we dealt with a homeseekers 3 rd party representative	Commenced a review of our policy and procedures in the way that we deal with 3 rd party representatives

- 6.4 Because of the low number of complaints received under the pilot in Housing Management, the HRA Business Support Team has undertaken an independent review of all of the complaints received across the service in Q2 (since the start of the learning pilot) in order to allow an informed discussion at the SMT meeting in October. This involved reviewing the 29 complaints received and responded to in the time period, inclusive of those where learning has already been identified.
- 6.5 Because this review has been carried out independently, the findings set out in the next part of this report have not been discussed with the relevant team managers. The HRA Business Support Team welcomes any comments from those team managers following the presentation and discussion of this report.
- 6.6 The findings of the exercise are as follows:

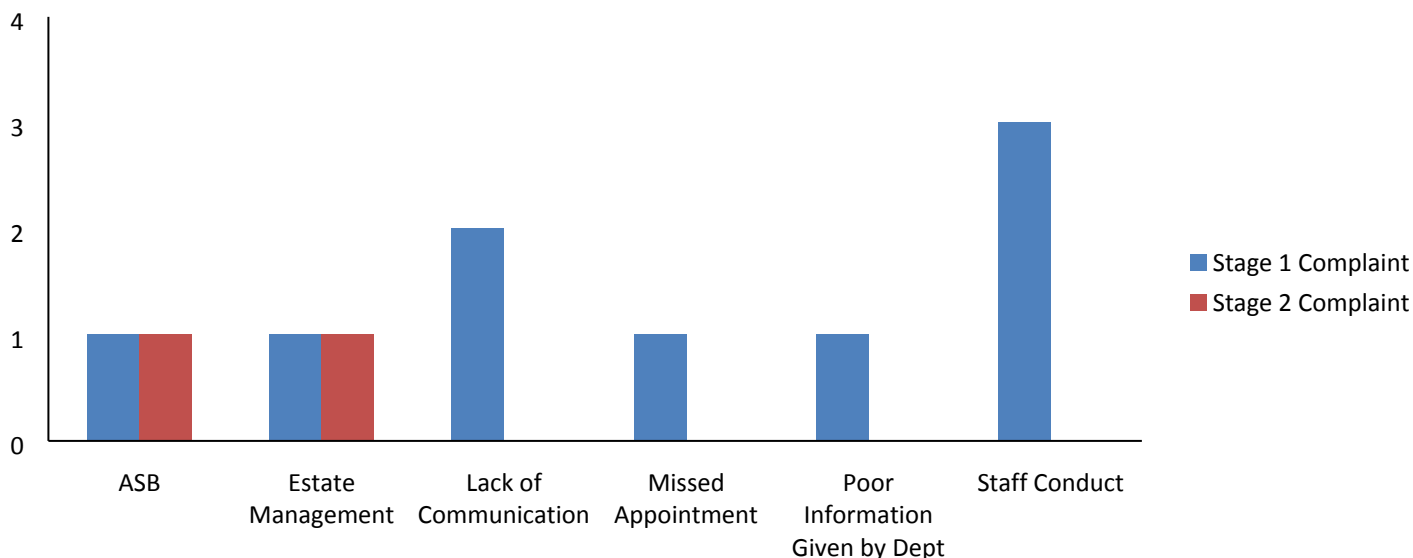
Service Area	Number of Complaints	Learning Identified	No Learning Identified
Housing Management	11	5 (45%)	6
Asset Management	17	15 (88%)	2
Strategic Housing	1	1 (100%)	0
Total	29	23 (79%)	6

Using the data available, each service area's complaints can be broken down as shown on the next page:

6.6 Housing Management

6.6.1 Of the 11 complaints received in Housing Management, they can be defined as follows:

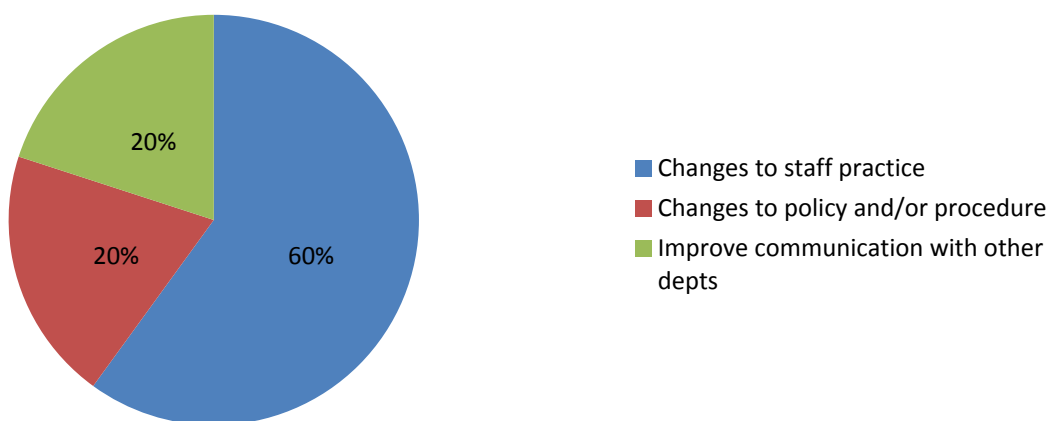
Total Complaints Received by Category



6.6.2 Of the 11 complaints, 6 of them have not resulted in any learning being identified, either because the complaint was not upheld (5) or because the complaint was in fact a service request which resulted in a general visit by the relevant member of staff (1)

6.6.3 From the remaining 5 complaints where learning has been identified, the learning can be categorised as follows:

Learning Identified within Housing Management



(This chart includes the 2 formally identified learning examples – both of which were changes to staff practice)

6.6.4 The analysis undertaken by the Business Support Team suggests that the learning identified within these 5 complaints can be addressed fairly easily, and can be resolved by reviewing the relevant policy or procedure, or by making changes to staff practice.

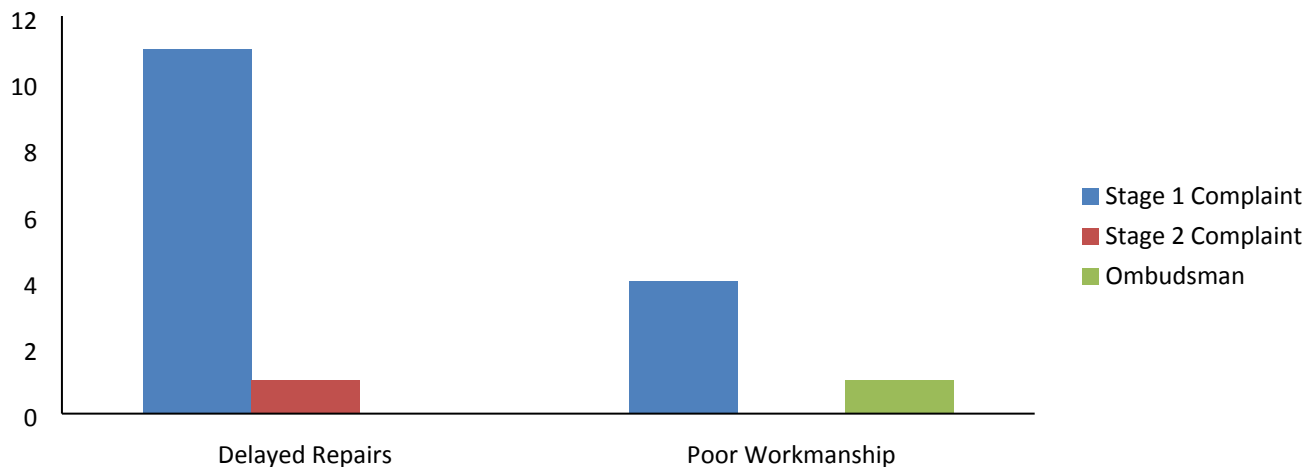
6.6.5 It is suggested that any learning relating to changing staff practice is implemented on an ongoing basis as and when learning is required, but it is crucial to regularly review these changes to ensure that they have been successful.

6.6.6 Any policy/procedure changes should be addressed without undue delay and with a clear target set in each case..

6.7 Asset Management

6.7.1 The 17 complaints received in Asset Management can be defined as follows:

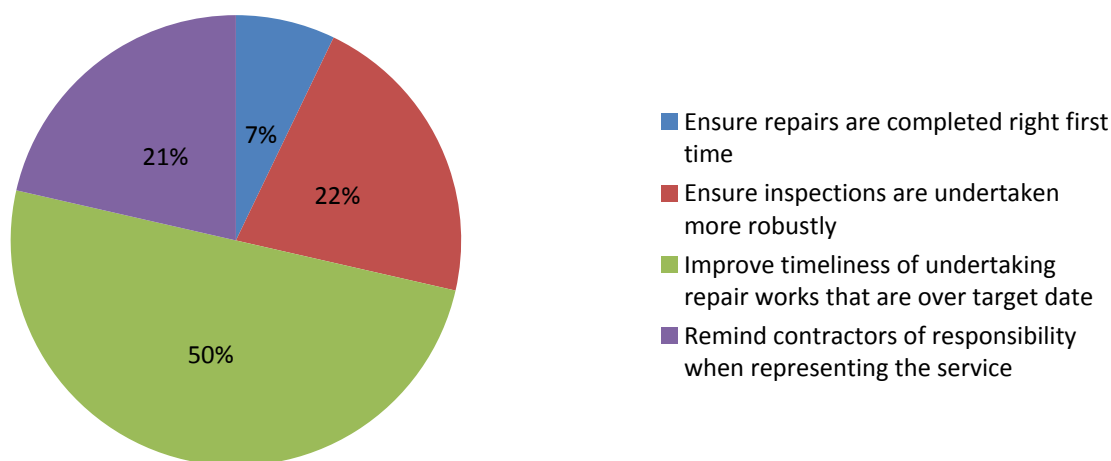
Total Complaints Received by Category



6.7.2 Of the 17 complaints, 3 of them have not resulted in any learning being identified, either because the complaint was not upheld (1) or because the complaint was in fact a service request which resulted in a general visit by the relevant member of staff (2)

6.7.3 From the remaining 14 complaints where learning has been identified, the HRA Business Support team suggests that the learning can be categorised as follows:

Learning Identified within Asset Mgt Team



- 6.7.4 The majority of the complaints received across the Asset Management Team are in relation to tenants who have waited too long for works to be carried out. In all of the complaints identified in Q2, the works have all exceeded the target time. Typically these complaints are damp related.
- 6.7.5 In many cases responses to the complaints have not specifically set out what we will change and improve upon, although an apology and an acknowledgement that the quality of service delivered is not indicative of what we aim to provide is likely to be included. As a result responses have been evaluated and conclusions reached as to what is required to improve outcomes.
- 6.7.6 In undertaking the analysis for this report some conclusions have been reached, which are suggested areas to be looked at to address the shortcomings. It may be that these are not appropriate in every case where individual circumstances dictate otherwise.
- 6.7.7 Importantly, most of the learning outcomes should be addressed by the new team structure when it is in place. The shortcomings relating to timeliness, quality and resource should be addressed by the end of Q3 and the changes to policy when undertaking surveys in properties should be drafted and agreed by the relevant corporate meeting group (SMT/CLT/Cabinet etc) by the end of the financial year and subsequently reviewed regularly.
- 6.7.8 The HRA Business Support Team's conclusions are set out in the following paragraphs.
- 6.7.9 Disappointments from tenants may be avoided by sending a communication to affected tenants when they would expect the works to be rescheduled, rather than waiting for them to get in touch with us.
- 6.7.10 This type of complaint can be avoided by forecasting the volumes of certain types of repairs undertaken across the financial year and ensuring that appropriate resource is available to the service to cope with the demand. Consideration should also be given as to whether the Asset Management Team still deems it necessary to split its time between repairs and empty homes works, or whether each operative should work on any type of property as required by demand.
- 6.7.11 This forecasting of resource requirements can be done on a rolling 12 month basis using already existing reports within OneServe, which can also inform the service managers whether sufficient resource exists to cope with the demand. This report could be created and in place by the end of Q3.
- 6.7.12 The remaining complaints relate mostly to those where a survey or inspection has not identified all of the repairs required in a property, or where the wrong kind of repair has been identified and undertaken. Whilst the right repair is not always evident, implementing best practice from top performing organisations may be a way to significantly reduce repairs requiring more than one visit.
- 6.7.13 The final category of complaints relates to poor workmanship being undertaken by contractors (including Kier, Lovell, Wates, and their appropriate support contractors). There have been a number of complaints received whereby these contractors have undertaken poor quality work which has resulted in complaints which NWLDC has had to respond to. There may be further opportunities to improve contract management to drive up contractor performance and reduce complaints.

6.8 Strategic Housing

- 6.8.1 There was only 1 complaint received in Q2 for Strategic Housing which was received in relation to staff conduct. The complaint, which is noted in 6.3 above, was not upheld, but the review of the case highlighted that we needed to make a change to our policy when dealing with 3rd party representatives of homeseekers.
- 6.8.2 Work to formally change the policy to reflect the learning identified is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed by the end of Q3 with a view to it being agreed by the relevant corporate body by the start of 17/18

6.9 HRA Business Support Team

- 6.9.1 There haven't been any complaints made against the team in Q2, perhaps because of the nature of the service. Subject to SMT's approval as highlighted in section 7.2 below, we will continue to monitor learning that can be identified on future cases.
- 6.10 SMT is asked to consider the formal implementation of the learning log across the remaining services within Housing. In Q3 and Q4 2015-16, complaints were received as follows. Given that complaints so far this year have reduced by 29%, we can expect the following volumes if trends continue:

	2015-16 Q3 and Q4	Expected 2016-17 Q3 and Q4
Asset Management Team	79	56
Housing Management	13	9
Housing Choices	4	3
HRA Business Support Team	0	0
Total	96	68

If learning logs are completed, and identified learning is implemented, coupled with other service improvements, the expected figure may reduce.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That SMT considers the learning identified at 6.3 above, the further analysis carried out by HRA Business Support, any follow-up work required and the associated timescales for implementing any changes
- 7.2 That SMT considers the implementation of the learning form across all or some of the remaining areas within the service, which, combined with the complaint satisfaction survey, which will be implemented in line with the Team Business Plan, could be led by the HRA Business Support Team and reported back to SMT on a regular basis.
- 7.3 That SMT makes note of the above and provides feedback.

Report Written by: HRA Business Support Team