

People Committee

17 June 2025

Annual Housing Landlord Complaints Report

Report by Wale Adetoro, Director Housing

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Emily Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Last Committee Reference: Not relevant

Purpose of Report

To approve the Housing Landlord Complaints Self Assessment 2025/26 and to note other relevant reports as required by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:

1. the Housing Landlord Complaints Self Assessment 2024/25 at **Annex 1** of the report be noted; and
2. the Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report 2024/25 at **Annex 2** of the report be approved.

Benefits to the Community:

Enhanced compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code, allowing greater scrutiny leading to more coherent and efficient handling of complaints and improving residents' experience.

Key Points

- A. The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaints Handling Code (The Code) became statutory on 1 April 2024. Alongside providing a single set of standards for all complaints procedures for its members, there is now a legal duty placed on the HOS to monitor compliance with the Code. This means that the Council must submit its self-assessment annually, produce an Annual Complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, provide a response to the report and publish all of these on the complaints part of the website.

- B. The annual Housing Landlord Complaints Self Assessment, at **Annex 1** of the report, is presented to the Committee for approval. The Self Assessment and Annual Complaints report will be submitted to the HOS in line with the due date of 30 September 2025 and following this Committee meeting a further submission will be made to give the response to the information presented from the Committee. Failure to publish a complete Self Assessment and provide evidence of this through the annual submission may result in the HOS finding failure to comply with The Code and a Complaint Handling Failure being issued.
- C. The Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report, at **Annex 2**, is presented to the Committee for challenge, scrutiny and approval. The Council's response to the annual report forms part of the report and the Committee is asked to note its contents for information.
- D. The Annual Housing Ombudsman Service report at **Annex 3** is presented to the Committee for information alongside the Housing Ombudsman Service Annual Landlord report at **Annex 4**.

Housing Landlord Complaints Handling Code

- 1. Complaints about Housing where the Council is the landlord are investigated in line with the Localism Act 2011 and Housing Act 1996 (schedule 2) and Equality Act 2010.
- 2. The Council have been managing these complaints in accordance with the Housing Complaints Policy which was implemented in April 2024.
- 3. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the HOS to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the scheme should have in place for considering complaints. It also placed a duty on the HOS to monitor compliance with the code of practice that it has issued.
- 4. The HOS Code became statutory from 1 April 2024 and the duty to monitor compliance commenced at the same time.
- 5. Paragraphs 9-12 of the [Housing Ombudsman Scheme](#) sets out the membership obligations to which all landlords must adhere. Paragraph 9b specifies that landlords must establish and maintain a complaints procedure in accordance with the Code. For the Council, a new separate Housing Landlord complaints policy and procedure was approved by the Housing Board and implemented from 1 April 2024.
- 6. Failure to comply with the conditions of membership, including the Complaint Handling Code, may result in an HOS's determination of complaint handling failure and an order to rectify within a given timescale.

7. The HOS may report a member's complaint handling failure to any appropriate regulatory agency and/or the board, committee, panel or senior officer of the member along with any related details as the HOS sees fit.

Self Assessment

8. There is a legal duty placed on the HOS to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord. Landlords need to submit their Self Assessment annually to the HOS. The Self Assessment must also be published on the Council's website so that residents are able to easily access it.
9. The Self Assessment requires the Council to assess itself against each provision of the Code. In doing so, the Council can identify areas of operation or policy where changes are required or where improvements should be made. The Self Assessment also requires the Council to evidence how they comply with the Code.
10. If the Council was unable to comply with the Code, this must be confirmed in the Self Assessment and set out the actions and timescales for achieving compliance or demonstrate how all reasonable endeavours to meet the intentions in an alternative way have been made. The Self Assessment provides the Council with an opportunity to be open and transparent with residents on their complaint handling performance.
11. The Council has been able to meet the requirements as set out in the Self Assessment and is provided in **Annex 1**.

Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report

12. To comply with the Housing Ombudsman Code, the Council follows different timescales for Housing Landlord complaints compared to corporate complaints. Previously, some issues were addressed informally under 'Initial Contact Concerns' (ICCs). However, the Code makes clear that residents do not need to use the word 'complaint' for an issue to be treated as one, and that more than two complaint stages are not allowed. As a result, all expressions of dissatisfaction are now logged as formal stage one complaints. (See **Annex 2** for full report.)
13. For the 2024/25 period, our housing stock of 6,000 properties received 292 Stage 1 and 65 Stage 2 complaints. This volume means 5% of the homes we manage resulted in a complaint.
14. The volume of complaints received in 2024/25 also represents a 10% reduction compared to the previous year.

15. The number of stage one complaints escalating to stage two continues to decrease year on year:

- 42% in 2021/22
- 24% in 2022/23
- 23% in 2023/24
- 22% in 2024/25

This suggests more complaints are being resolved at the first stage.

16. The number of partially upheld and upheld complaints at stage one was 219 in 2024/25.
17. The majority of complaints are related to repairs and maintenance. Complaints are typically upheld if any single repair or maintenance issue is identified, even if all other aspects of the complaint are not supported.
18. The percentage of partially upheld and upheld complaints recorded at stage two, has decreased year on year from 70% in 2021/22, 66% in 2022/23, 63% in 2023/24 to 61% in 2024/25.
19. Complaints at stage one and stage two largely relate to repairs and maintenance making up around 70% of both stages. These complaints include repairs not being carried out, repairs not being carried out to satisfaction, repairs not completed, repairs not resolved in full, poor communication, contractors being late and appointments being cancelled at short notice.
20. Due to the volume of repairs complaints, the Council has taken steps to improve, including:
- Identifying recurring themes and lessons learned
 - Improving aftercare
 - Issuing guidance to contractors and partners on how to handle complaints. The procurement of the repairs contract was led by our residents from design to interview and evaluation. A key plank of the tender was improving the customer experience. Our residents sit on the Alliance Core Group directly supporting the Council to manage and monitor the contract every month.
21. In 2024/25, the Council did not refuse any complaints. Going forward, if any complaints are refused, the Council will be required to report to the HOS on a 'comply or explain' basis. This means that we will outline why a complaint does not meet criteria and/or cannot be progressed at the first point of contact. This will manage expectations and allow quicker access to the HOS.
22. The implemented complaints procedure provides increased transparency by giving officers access to advice and response templates in line with the Code. These resources clarify investigation procedures upon receiving a complaint and outline relevant policies to reference in responses.

23. The reporting function allows better understanding about why complaints have become complaints and why complaints are escalating and/or being upheld.
24. To ensure that the diverse needs of our customers are met, it is vital that we have a system in place to not only identify any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary but also to consistently track and monitor these adjustments. This commitment extends to our contractors, with whom we must maintain clear communication that any complaints received will be used as valuable feedback and as a tool for ongoing service monitoring.
25. Data analysis of the complaints system will identify issues disproportionately affecting different equality groups, root causes of complaints, and lessons learned.
26. Over the past year we have collected lessons learned for service improvement, the main themes are listed,

Enhancing the Resident Experience and Communication

We prioritise providing clear, proactive and accurate information at the point of contact, ensuring immediate action on complaints. Following our resident complaint outcomes we will continue to foster a resident-centric approach by demonstrating empathy, valuing feedback and consistently checking in with residents to confirm progress and satisfactory resolution.

Operational Efficiency and Accountability

We strive to streamline service delivery processes and ensure good performance. Key areas include optimising repair scheduling, improving job handoffs and refining contingency planning through close collaboration with contractors. A critical element is holding contractors accountable for quality of work and effective communication with residents.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

We look to embed a culture of learning from past incidents to prevent future recurrences. It encompasses the systematic reporting of lessons learned, developing and implementing robust action plans to resolve upheld complaints with an emphasis on post-resolution aftercare. Additionally, it highlights the importance of continuous professional development for all Housing complaint responders, including leveraging resources like the Housing Ombudsman Centre for Learning.

Embedding an improved resident experience into our service

Our residents have been integral to improving the service. They supported the Council in designing the repairs and maintenance service specification, with a focus on proactive communication to progress and have sight of responsive repair appointments. Following the appointment of the new contractor, there is a monthly challenge with resident members, on the

performance of the contract, including complaints.

The tenant scrutiny panel will review this report as part of their challenge on our performance and there will be further learning shared in the Summer Newsletter that is distributed to all residents.

However, we are pleased that in a very challenging year where we have managed the end of a long term relationship with Axis and the commencement of a new contract that has seen a reduction in repairs complaints. This occurred during a period of time where the sector has seen complaints about repairs rise exponentially.

We were also pleased to be able to manage the transfer of the contract to Cardo Group efficiently with limited impact on the service delivery. We kept tenants and leaseholders informed during this time and questions were invited throughout the change process, from residents.

Annual Housing Ombudsman Service report

27. Definitions:

Maladministration - A formal decision by the Ombudsman that a landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or, in the Ombudsman's opinion has delayed unreasonably

Service failure - The Housing Ombudsman defines "service failure" as the lowest level of maladministration. It refers to:

A single or very limited number of minor failings in the landlord's service delivery.

These failings are determined to have had a minimal detrimental impact on the resident.

It applies where there is evidence of failure or failings that the landlord either did not appropriately acknowledge and/or did not fully put right. This can include instances where the landlord made an offer of compensation, but the Ombudsman's investigation finds that the offer does not quite reflect the detriment to the resident and/or is not proportionate to the failings identified.

- 28. The Annual Housing Ombudsman Service landlord report for 2023/24 was received by the Council in November 2024. The report for 2024/25 has not yet been provided.
- 29. The Housing Ombudsman also published their Annual Complaints Review, alongside the overall national performance data from the social housing sector in 2023-24. This review looks at individual landlord performance, as well as how the sector is performing at a regional level.
- 30. In 2023/24 the national figure for maladministration findings was a total of

8619. Kingston Council received 14 maladministration findings in 2023/24 from the HOS which related to property conditions, delays in complaint responses being sent and information and data management.

31. In the Housing Ombudsman National Annual Review 2023/24 they said,

“Resolving some of the fundamental issues we have seen in our casework through this Annual Complaints Review can be the catalyst for a better future where landlords prevent complaints coming to us and deliver better outcomes for residents.

Until then, this Review also shows the scale of our intervention. We are making more remedies and, using our wider orders powers, these are becoming more far reaching to put things right for other residents impacted and prevent complaints”

Consultation

32. It is a statutory requirement to produce and publish these reports. The reports are presented for challenge and scrutiny, there is no consultation required.

Timescale

33. The Council should submit the Self Assessment and associated reports by the deadline of 30 September 2025. The Committee’s response to the report will be included in the submission after the call in expiry.

Resource Implications

34. There are no immediate resource implications arising as a result of this report. While the report outlines the large increase in complaints which may have resource implications in the future, it does not propose how these may be managed. Any future recommendations for an increase in resource would be accompanied by a detailed business case and action plan and subject to the usual governance processes.

Legal Implications

35. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

Risk Assessment

36. Should the Council not comply with the dates and requirements as set out by the HOS it would be issued with a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO).

Equalities Implications

37. An Equalities Relevance Test has been undertaken and indicated there was no impact and therefore no Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

Health Implications

38. There are no health implications in respect of this work.

Environmental Impact

39. None

Background papers: None for the purposes of this report.

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