



<b>Title:-</b>	Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report	
<b>Meeting:-</b>	Alpha Board	
<b>Meeting Date:-</b>	16th July 2024	
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<b>Action Required:-</b>	For discussion	
<b>Summary:-</b>	This report is to fulfil our outstanding obligation to produce an Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report to be published on our website, alongside a response from the board.	
<b>Delivery Plan Objective:-</b>	<b>Number &amp; Title</b>	4 - Taking risks and managing risk - a sustainable business
	<b>Objective</b>	- This report
<b>Risk Assessment:-</b>	<b>Number &amp; Title</b>	7A - Reputation
	<b>Likelihood</b>	3 (medium/low) - net risk
	<b>Impact</b>	2 (medium/low) - net risk
	<b>Comments</b>	
<b>Financial / Value for Money Implications</b>	None directly	
<b>Customer Impact / Views</b>	Improve our accountability to residents by ensuring compliance with the Complaints Handling Code	
<b>Staffing Implications</b>	Changes to the ombudsman's complaints handling ode can be contained within the existing structure	
<b>Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Implications (EDIB)</b>	The experience and impacts of discrimination, prejudice and unconscious bias on all minority groups when complaining.	

## 1. Recommendation

- 1.1 For members to acknowledge the contents of the report
- 1.2 For members to formally respond to this report via a written statement and the response to be published on our website as required by the Ombudsman's code.

### Report detail

#### Background

In summer 2023 the previous government introduced the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, the legislation has been designed to deliver the aims of the Social Housing White Paper (2021) around strengthening consumer standards, improving resident engagement and tackling poor performing landlords. This legislation further strengthens the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman to provide more support to residents and to ensure providers like Alpha Living manage feedback effectively.

As of April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman expects all landlords to produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. As a specialist older persons housing provider, we have always welcomed feedback from our customers and their families, as it provides us with an opportunity to continually improve what we do and how we do it.

As per the Ombudsman code, our complaints policy reflects a two stage complaints process, ensuring at all complaints are investigated thoroughly and if required, any findings reviewed. Following our two-stage process, should a complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome, our policy supports the escalation of their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

#### Summary of complaints received in 2023/2024

During 2023/24 a total of 25 formal complaints were received, a reduction from 37 from the previous year (32%). While fewer complaints can be interpreted as a positive, we need to recognise the position is possibly more complex than presented due to how our residents communicate with development-based colleagues. This may mean that issues that could potentially have been deemed a complaint are being dealt with at development level.

Of the 25 complaints recorded, 1 complaint was deemed impossible to resolve - the alleged complainant denied making the complaint and we were unable to investigate further.

We continue to analyse complaints received, looking at the number of complaints against each category and measuring the effectiveness of Alpha Living in terms of adhering to complaint resolution timescales.

The data also confirms the outcome of complaints in relation to whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

- a total of 25 complaints (Stage 1) were recorded through the Complaints Handling Process during the reporting year
- There was 1 complaint escalated to Stage 2 - (original decision was upheld)
- No complaints were referred to the Housing Ombudsman

32% of total complaints were upheld  
20% partially upheld and  
48% were not upheld

- We processed 72% of complaints within the stipulated timescales as laid down by the Housing Ombudsman (either 10 days or with extension of 10 days)
- 28% of complaints were outside the timescales (Detail of complaints out of target available in Appendix B)

### Service Improvements

Where a complaint was upheld or partially upheld, an apology was issued and where appropriate compensation was paid, the total amount of compensation paid during the period was £1,694.45. Where compensation wasn't paid, flowers were also sent on behalf of Alpha to the complainant along with their apology letter.

We continue to promote a lesson learnt approach and have reviewed various policies/procedures alongside additional training to our teams because of the complaints we received. For example, the complaint we received relating directly to a resident's experience or delay with a third party such as contractors delivering services on our behalf. When a complaint is received, the third party will now form part of the complaint investigation. We have follow-up discussions with third parties as part of regular contractor review meetings to share the learning and set the standards we expect for our residents. We continue to review and monitor these complaints to ensure high levels of service are maintained

Many of the complaints received were simply down to lack of communication between internal teams and failure to keep residents updated. To address this quarterly meetings/training sessions are now held with all staff (cross teams), giving everybody the opportunity to discuss the challenges and resolve issues earlier. Each complaint received is also discussed at these sessions to minimise the risk of recurrence, and an opportunity for staff to challenge and optimise processes and procedures for continuous improvement.

Development Managers have been encouraged and empowered to respond to issues raised by residents, which gives our customers confidence that they have been heard and advised that if a colleague fails to respond to queries, they should escalate appropriately. We must rule out any underlying causes and not presume that it is residents' perception ensuring we act quickly to identify issues and resolve them at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid further frustration or upset for our residents.

We have introduced annual Planned Property Maintenance inspections (PPMs) to proactively identify repairs required (not only relating to damp and mold) resulting in works being undertaken in a planned programmed way - residents are now often made aware of issues before they have noticed, which again provides our customers with confidence in their landlord.

One of the complaints which fell outside of target required a third-party consultant to assess the various options and specify the equipment which was where the delays were incurred. Alpha do not currently have the resources to carry out this work internally and it has been identified that we must improve our processes around engaging with third parties to ensure a timely response to commissioning their services. However, for this example, there was regular communication with the resident who understood the reasons for the delays

### **3 Appendices**

**Appendix A - Housing Ombudsman's Complaints self-assessment**

**Appendix B - Detail of out of target complaints**