



Waltham Forest Housing Association Complaints Handling Statement and Formal Board Response

WFHA's Board take complaints seriously: they are a key mechanism for service improvement. We encourage complaints and foster an environment where complaints are valued, addressed and learnt from.

The Board regularly receive complaint data and analysis and are confident matters are managed appropriately in line with the WFHA's and the Ombudsman's complaints process. The performance is represented by this statement.

Board Member Tyron Julien has been elected the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

WFHA Complaints Performance and Action Statement

What follows is a statement about the performance of WFHA on complaints over the past year. The organisation is now required to complete and publish this annually in addition to the self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

It is also a requirement that Members formally respond to the statement and that that response is published.

Additionally, the self-assessment requirements have changed somewhat, requiring some amendments to the complaints policy presented to members in March. Whilst these are minor, they are important for transparency with all our stakeholders. The procedure and leaflet will also reflect these changes.

The updated policy has been approved by chair's action but is appended to this paper the Committee to ratify. Should any further amendments be required, those can be accommodated.

Statement

Background

It is a requirement of the Ombudsman that all social housing providers comply with the Complaints Handling Code and complete a self-assessment annually.

Complaints Review

In the financial year 2023/4, WFHA received 7 complaints and 2 councillor enquiries. We currently do not include service requests in our reporting but this is one of the changes being made going forward.

Of those 7 complaints

- 5 were closed at stage 1 and responded to by the Head of Service within the timescale of 10 working days;
- 2 were escalated to stage 2 and closed within the timescale of 20 working days by the Director of Housing;
- 1 of the complaints reaching stage 2 was partly upheld and a goodwill gesture offered.

The 2 councillor enquiries, whilst not formal complaints, were logged and responded to within the timescale of 5 working days. There was no further response from the Members.

Trends

Notwithstanding the small numbers of tenants making complaints, no trends were identified from either the subject matter or the demographics of the tenants making complaints.

Of the 7 complaints received, the subject matter included:

Asset

- Repairs not being completed quickly enough.
- Damage to property from a leak.
- Swale Heating leaving a tenant for a long period with no heating and not turning up for appointments.

Operations

- Unhappy that following an incident there was no further contact from WFHA.
- Communal carpets are dirty and have not been cleaned in some time.
- Gardeners were working in the rain and how they spoke to the tenant.
- Ongoing garden issues and the proposal to concrete the garden.

One complaint was partially upheld and related to failing to remember a previous request of the tenant. The details of this are not repeated here to protect the identity of the tenant.

Gender

These were from 4 tenants identifying as female and 3 male.

Ethnicity

2 identified as white British; 1 black Caribbean; 1 mixed black and white Caribbean; 2 black British African; 1 Chinese.

Compliments

3 compliments were received during the year, all regarding how quickly repairs were dealt with and completed.

Actions

WFHA continues to scrutinise complaints performance to learn lessons and improve standards and this is linked to ongoing work with the Consumer Regulation Action Plan.

That plan includes a focus on listening to tenants and acting on the information we receive.'

Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

In addition to the Executive lead on complaints, the Director of Housing, the Ombudsman requires a member of the governing body to take the lead in ensuring the Committees and Board are informed about complaints performance and learning.

As a minimum, the MRC and the Board must receive:

- a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;
- b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;
- c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and
- d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.