

Annual Complaints Handling Performance and Service Improvement Report

Background

Empower Housing Association (EHA) welcomes all feedback from tenants and their representatives and recognises that this feedback provides valuable information that we can use to tailor the services we offer and how we deliver them.

A key part of this feedback is tenant complaints, which allow us to learn from experiences where things may have gone wrong and make amendments and improvements to our working practices to ensure they don't happen again.

Having reviewed our approach to complaint handling against the Housing Ombudsman Service Statutory Complaint Handling Code, we will continue to provide focus and emphasis, through our quarterly and annual reporting to Board, on our performance, learning and any resulting service improvements for tenants.

Annual Self-Assessment against Complaint Handling Code (June 25)

The completed annual self-assessment of EHAs complaint handling demonstrates compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and gives assurance to Board that EHA continues to provide an accessible and positive complaint handling process overall for tenants.

Complaint Handling Performance 2024/25

Detailed below is a breakdown of the number of complaints including themes and service areas which have been the focus of complaints April - March 2024/25:

	Number of complaints refused	Total number of complaints	Theme of complaints	Complaint Stage		
				Stage 1	Stage 2	Ombudsman
Day to day repairs	0	5	Increased cost to tenant/s Unreasonable timescale of repairs Inconsistent communication Poor consideration of tenants needs Contractor conduct	5	0	0
Cyclical Maintenance	0	1	Contractor conduct/Quality of works	1	0	0
Compliance	0	1	Poor planning and information on location of electrical sockets and ineffective communication with care provider	1	0	0
Adaptations	0	1	Poor quality / ineffectiveness of work undertaken Inconsistent communication and consideration of tenant's complex needs *	1	0	0
Total	0	8		8	0	0

*Escalated to a stage 2 complaint in 2025/26

As a result of the complaints received, in 24/25, all complaints were upheld and key learning and service improvements were identified, ensuring that EHA does not repeat any failures and the tenants experience and standard of service delivery remains the best it can be at all times. We note that 1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2 in April 25.

Key Learning and Service Improvements

Service Area	Complaints Upheld
Day to Day Repairs	5
Key Learning	
Repairs were outstanding for an unreasonable time, increasing heating costs for tenants. Poor communication with tenants' families and care providers about planning in works.	
Service Improvements	
Implemented new coding & reporting to better track outstanding work Improved communication with contractors and tenants about access requirements. Increased pre and post inspections and ensure tenant satisfaction with quality of work	
Cyclical Maintenance	1
Key Learning	
Lack of communication from contractors about planned visits, causing concerns for tenants. Transactional surveys were ad hoc and do not provide enough feedback by contractor Substandard workmanship left homes untidy, and tenant and care provider dissatisfied	
Service Improvements	
Improved communication with contractors and tenants in advance and the day before the visit is planned Providing further information on works orders to all contractors, addressing any risk or additional considerations Increased pre and post inspections and ensure tenant satisfaction with quality of work.	
Compliance	1
Key Learning	
Insufficient electrical sockets and insufficient records of sockets in a new property. Maintenance team were not accessing EHA records and asked care team to provide the information	
Service Improvements	
Improved data recording on EHA systems. Annual review of PAT testing & further training for maintenance technicians Included information on use of white goods in the Winter Tenant Newsletter.	
Adaptations	1
Key Learning	
Ineffective adaptation works caused additional workload for care providers Delays in approval from funders led to unreasonable delays. Poor communication with tenants' families and care providers. Substandard contractor workmanship.	
Service Improvements	
Contractor no longer used for bathroom contracts Future adaptations must be designed and approved in liaison with Occupational Therapists and Statutory Services, particularly where more complex behaviours are involved – so that the behaviour and the materials or solutions provided are effective Managers reminded of importance of communication across all service areas Additional post inspections from April 25	

Housing Ombudsman

There has been no intervention or reporting by the Ombudsman in respect of EHA's compliance with its' own Complaints and Feedback Policy & Procedure and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code in 2024/25.

EHA continues to review quarterly and annual reports as well as Spotlight and Good Practice reports published by the Housing Ombudsman to adapt and use for continuous learning and service improvement. EHA also subscribes to the HOS e-learning hub ensuring a continuous learning culture is embedded across the organisation.

The recent Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on Learning from Severe Maladministration Report from January 2025 provided key learning for landlords to improve their handling of adaptations and support for residents with disabilities and mental health needs, this learning will be built into EHA procedures.

Colleague Training

All colleagues have attended Complaint Handling training which includes how colleagues are expected to handle complaints in line with EHA's Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure and to raise awareness of the Complaint Handling Code and the expectations of EHA's tenants in respect of how EHA must respond, the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). Colleagues within the Housing Management team have attended training on ASB, via the Resolve platform, including regular industry updates and e-bulletins and will be refreshed in 2025.

All colleagues have also attended a Customer & Me workshop, which covered dealing with customers, each other and equality and diversity.

Sharing Learning and Service Improvements

One of our complaints and how this was handled was reviewed by the Chair of the Board who is our Complaints Lead who concluded that although the initial response to the complaint could have been handled in a more timely manner and kept all parties informed as to progress/updates, we have followed our policy/procedures and identified lessons learnt

During 25/26 quarterly bulletins will continue to be developed and issued to all colleagues, reporting on the number of complaints, service requests, learning and service improvements as well as detailing forthcoming refresher training/webinars for colleagues to join as appropriate

Conclusion

EHA's proactive approach to learning from complaints and implementing service improvements ensures that the organisation continues to provide high-quality service and support to its tenants.

Through reviewing all complaints handled in 24/25 we have identified key areas of learning and areas for service improvement which will ensure we continue to improve services to tenants as a result of their feedback including, communication, timely repairs and adaptations, improved record keeping and colleague training.

However, we acknowledge that some areas were identified as learning last year, including communication and record keeping, and we will focus on these areas to ensure this is addressed through training, taking on board best practice through the HOS Spotlight Reports and working with peers in the Specialist Supported Housing Sector.

By addressing the issues identified and making necessary improvements, EHA aims to prevent recurrence of similar complaints in the future and improve tenant experience and satisfaction.

The ongoing engagement with tenants, care providers, and other stakeholders will help EHA to continuously refine its services and uphold its standards.