

Report to: Board
Report by CEO /Tony Price Board Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)
Subject: Ombudsman Self-Assessment 2024
Item Number:
Date: 14/5/24

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide background information on the completion of the Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment and the process followed.
- 1.2. The Joint Complaint Handling Code ('the Code'), from the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (dated 20 September 2023), sets out requirements for organisations that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals quickly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements.
- 1.3. Organisations must have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code. Non-compliance with the Code could result in the relevant Ombudsman taking further action. The Housing Ombudsman has a duty to monitor compliance with the Code and the power to issue Complaint Handling Failure Orders. Completed self-assessments must be submitted to the Ombudsman by the 30th of June 2024.
- 1.4. **Self-Assessment guidance** - The Code requires that landlords provide more information to the Ombudsman than just the self-assessment, instead the landlord must:

Produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which must include:
 - the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements

- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance - this must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept
- any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
- its actions following any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman
- its actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord

1.4.1. The landlord must also ensure that the annual complaints performance and service improvement report has been reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

1.4.2. A link to these documents from the landlord's website should be submitted to the Ombudsman via a dedicated electronic form which will be available on their website from early June 2024 along with further guidance.

1.4.3. Alternative forms, such as word documents, excel spreadsheets or PDFs will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances and where this has been agreed with the Ombudsman in advance. This is to ensure consistency of data collection and analysis.

1.4.4. Landlords are required to publish and submit their self-assessment as part of their annual complaints performance and service improvement report. To simplify the process, the dates for submission to the Ombudsman has been aligned with the Regulator of Social Housing's requirements for the publication and submission of TSM outcomes.

1.4.5. Dates for submission by landlords are as follows:

- landlords with 1,000 homes or more are required to submit their form by 30 June each year

- landlords with less than 1,000 properties are required to submit their self-assessments at the point they publish their TSMs or 12 weeks after their year-end, whichever is sooner

1.4.6. Landlords will be expected to report on their 2023/2024 performance in the annual complaints performance and service improvement report. Landlords can choose to include additional information regarding how they have performed for the period from April 2024 until their submission is due should they wish to do so.

2. **Regulatory Standards**

Withing Adullam Homes, Complaints, Compliments and Comments are monitored weekly, monthly, and reported quarterly to SLT. An annual report is also completed by the Assistant Director of Quality & Support and submitted to the Operations Committee.

Adullam Homes also have in place a Complaints/Tracker Group which meets each quarter with key officers in attendance to discuss and monitor complaints performance. The quality team will send out monthly complaints reports to staff and ask for updates direct from managers on progress.

Adullam Homes now has a Complaints Officer, and the role will focus on ensuring that the Complaints Policy, procedure, and processes are being applied/followed throughout Adullam per the Ombudsman regulatory requirements by completing regular and in-depth audits of Pyramid:

- Weekly reports are sent to managers with the data relating to their service, including information relating to letters missing from the Custom Tab, missing data from the Complaints details, staff proformas, complaints that are open passed the completion target, ensuring all compliments are closed the day of receipt, any central complaints have been recorded and the relevant manager notified etc.
- The Complaints Officer meets with each service manager once a quarter to look at any issues that were not addressed, discuss any patterns of incorrect recording/not following the complaints procedure and highlights any training needs for the service.
- Monthly reports are sent to all managers highlighting the main areas that need addressing.
- The Complaints Officer provides an overall quarterly report for SLT including any areas that need addressing and inform SLT of any complaints that have been forwarded to Housing Ombudsman.

- Meets with Central Managers to ensure they are following the correct procedures with complaints assigned to their Cost Centres.
- Runs 2 Complaints training sessions every 4-6 months for new staff/those that require refresher training.
- Is also responsible for the completion of the Annual Self-Assessment against Ombudsman code.

Please note, the responsibility for inputting complaints, investigating complaints, and communicating with complainants will still sit within the services.

RSM Internal Auditors - RSM have undertaken an assessment (during January 2024) of the current Complaints and Feedback Policy (dated January 2024) to identify whether this clearly demonstrates alignment to the Code.

- **Conclusion** - Overall, RSM's judgement was that the Association's Complaints and Feedback Policy shows a general alignment to the Joint Complaints Handling Code – however there are several areas where the Policy should be amended to show a clearer alignment to specific requirements of the Code.

Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment – The Quality Assurance Manager began the completion of the Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment form during the fourth quarter which has been shared with members of SLT. There are seventy two separate areas of compliance included within the assessment of which Adullam Homes must show evidence of compliance. Where areas of non-compliance/partial compliance were identified this has now been addressed. This was finalised during April working with the input/joint working of the Assistant Director of Quality & Assurance and submitted to the Ombudsman in June 2024.

A number of other actions including amendments to policy and procedure will also be taken forward.

Adullam Homes are also required to complete a report to be submitted to the ombudsman along with the assessment. This report must include:

- the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements
- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance - this must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept
- any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
- its actions following any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman

- its actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord

Adullam Homes must also ensure that the annual complaints performance and service improvement report has been reported to our governing body and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. **The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.**

Adullam Homes are required to publish and submit our self-assessment as part of our annual complaints performance and service improvement report. To simplify the process, the dates for submission to the Ombudsman has been aligned with the Regulator of Social Housing's requirements for the publication and submission of TSM outcomes.

Please see attached completed Self-Assessment for 2024 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report - April 2024 (2023/24 Q1-Q4)

3. **Recommendation** - That committee note the content of the report.

In the event of any queries please contact the report author prior to the meeting.

Report Author:

Email:

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