

## Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report 2024-25

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. First Priority Housing Association conducts an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 1.2. In 2023-24, we reported that we were compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code following our self-assessment. We also produced our first annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report following changes to the Code in February 2024.

### 2. Summary of complaints received in 2024-25

*Table 1: Complaints received by Stage of complaint*

<b>Complaint stage</b>	<b>Number received (2023-24)</b>
Stage 1	20
Stage 2	0

*Table 2: Complaints received by service area*

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Number received (2023-24)</b>
Repairs	11
Antisocial behaviour	4
Grounds maintenance	3
Other	2

- 2.1. We recognise that there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24. Last year, we received one Stage 1 complaint.
- 2.2. As a tenant-focused organisation representing tenants that often do not have capacity to provide feedback, relying on others to do this on their behalf, we recognised the need to strengthen awareness of the complaints procedure. We took the several steps to increase this awareness this year including:
  - Providing Training and briefing sessions to all frontline staff within our managing agent. This has improved their understanding our Complaints Policy, the importance of learning from complaints and how to recognise complaints as per the Housing Ombudsman's definition. As a result, we have received more complaints logged directly from Housing Officers.
  - Amendments to our Tenants Handbook on how to provide feedback, including information on the role of the Housing Ombudsman.
  - Improved information on our website to promote our feedback routes and wider Complaints Policy.
  - Increased engagement with Support Provider partners, taking more feedback directly into our senior management team.
  - Increased resource directly employed by our organisation including the recruitment of a new Head of Operations. This has improved our oversight of operational matters and increased visibility among tenants, partners and other stakeholders.

- Our managing agent also recruited a Complaints and Safeguarding Manager to improve the internal controls and end-to-end management of complaints. This has led to an increase in the number of expressions of dissatisfaction being raised as complaints, as per our Policy.
- 2.3. The increase in the number of complaints received has also been a trend across the sector. We are assured that the number of complaints received does not present a fundamental risk to the organisation.
  - 2.4. The theme of complaints is also not uncommon when comparing to other social landlords. Our Repairs Review conducted in 2024 reflects our learnings from complaints. This provides us with assurance that we have understood where the shortcomings in this service were and what is required to improve this moving forward.
  - 2.5. The appointment of the Head of Operations in September 2023 has also increased the oversight of issues, progressing them to complaints where necessary. This will be further improved in 2025-26 with the recruitment of a new Property Services Manager and Senior Housing Manager.

### **3. Engagement with the Housing Ombudsman**

- 3.1. There has been no engagement with the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.2. None of our complaints to date have been escalated with the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.3. Information on how complainants can contact the Housing Ombudsman, who they are and how their services can be utilised as part of the complaint process.
- 3.4. We have not received an annual report on our performance from the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.5. We have also not received any other reports from the Housing Ombudsman about our performance in 2024-25.

### **4. Oversight of complaints**

- 4.1. Complaints are managed end-to-end by First Priority Housing Association. We changed our process part way through this year.
  - 4.1.1. The Head of Operations was conducting reviews of all responses that were sent by our managing agent who were previously managing Stage 1 of the complaint process. Responses were found to be of the quality required to meet all aspects of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. As such, the decision was made for this to be managed entirely by FPHA.
  - 4.1.2. Stage 1 complaints are now investigated and responded to by the Head of Operations, liaising with the managing agent (where required).
  - 4.1.3. Stage 2 complaints are now responded to by the Chief Executive. They are also the responsible person for Complaints within the organisation.

- 4.2. Outside of this, we also appointed a lead Board Member for Complaints. A bi-monthly meeting is held with them to report on complaints, take feedback and help prepare reports for the wider Board.
- 4.3. Board review complaints performance at every Board meeting. This includes any learning from complaints. This is a standing item within the Head of Operations report.
- 4.4. Complaints performance is also a standing item at the monthly performance meeting held with the managing agent. This provides time to discuss learning from complaints, as well as the overall performance.

## 5. Complaints performance 2024-25

Complaint Stage	Number received	Number responded to on time	Percentage responded to on time
Stage 1	20	18	90%
Stage 2	0	0	N/A

- Our target is to respond to 100% of complaints within 10-working days. We do accept that this may not always be possible, and some complaints may require extensions.
- 2 complaints of 20 were not responded to within the 10-working day timescale specified within the Complaint Handling Code. However, both of these complaints were subject to agreed extensions with the complainants. This was due to the complexity involved in investigating and delays to receiving information back from other parties involved. This included contractors and our managing agent. Both complainants had these extensions verbally agreed and then confirmed in writing, in accordance with the Code.
- It is worth noting that since we took back full control of the end-to-end complaint handling process all complaints have been responded to within 10-working days.
- Looking ahead to 2025-26, we will be required to complete our next Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey which will ask for tenants' satisfaction on how we have managed their complaint. This will update our performance where in 2022-23, tenant satisfaction with our complaints handling was 25%. 4 tenants claimed to have submitted a complaint to FPHA, despite our performance monitoring and formal responses only totalling 1 complaint. With such small response volumes, percentage figures do not present a representative result. We did however recognise the need to improve our complaint handling from the feedback that we did receive. We are optimistic that the work we have done to raise awareness of our Complaints Policy and process will result in more positive feedback moving forward.

## 6. Using insights from complaints to improve services

Trend identified	Action(s) taken to improve services
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<p><b>Communication with repairs</b> It has been found there are shortcomings in our communication when we are managing both repairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Repairs Review was conducted in 2024, with the findings presented to Board in January 2025. These recommendations are currently being progressed with our managing agent to improve the service to tenants. A large focus of this is improving communication.</li> <li>• There has been an over-reliance on contractors to communicate repairs appointments and follow on actions. There has and continues to be a review of our contractors, with clearer criteria around expectations when it comes to communicating with tenants and Support Providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Delays to repairs</b> There have been delays to repairs driven by inefficiencies within process with our managing agent, weak contract management and delays to repairs being approved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Repairs Review also presented recommendations designed to reduce the time taken to complete repairs and reduce the number of outstanding repairs.</li> <li>• There is a review of staffing requirements ongoing.</li> <li>• We are reviewing what structure can best service our tenants and ensure that our quality standards for services like repairs can be delivered. This is in-line with the expectations outlined in our Repairs Policy.</li> <li>• A weekly meeting was introduced to monitor the number of outstanding repairs. This has improved communication with our managing agent and contractors. This has also bolstered our internal controls on repairs delivery.</li> <li>• A new Property Services Manager is being recruited in 2025 to oversee repairs, compliance and asset management performance with the managing agent.</li> <li>• We approved the procurement and development of our own Repairs and Maintenance system which will allow greater flexibility when managing repairs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Delays to the delivery of white goods</b> We have received several complaints in relation to delays in white goods being replaced/ repaired.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weaknesses in supplier management were identified. The previous process did not account for the vulnerability of our tenants, where timescales needed to be expediated to meet their needs. This has been raised with our supplier.</li> <li>• Where we are unable to deliver white goods within a reasonable timeframe to meet the</li> </ul>

	<p>needs of our tenants, we now engage with alternative suppliers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps were found in internal processes around processing payments for white goods and sourcing PO numbers. This has been addressed with the Finance department and workarounds are in place where we have urgent cases.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Management of the grounds maintenance service</b> At the beginning of the year, there were delays to the grounds maintenance service commencing, due to the failure of one of our contractors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigations into the complaints received found that there had been a lack of quality assurance checks taking place on grounds maintenance.</li> <li>• Our property inspection reporting was amended to include gardens and communal areas. Staff are encouraged to take photos of all areas and report any issues to the Helpdesk so that they can be followed up with contractors.</li> <li>• Issues were also identified within our systems in scheduling grounds maintenance at our properties. This is in part a planning issue. We have sought to improve this for 2025-26 to have works schedules planned across all properties and quotes approved in advance of the gardening season beginning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication with ASB</b> Communication when managing ASB cases has been inconsistent, leading to dissatisfaction with complainants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We amended our ASB Policy utilising best practice from across the sector. We also consulted with a leading sector expert in ASB when developing our new policy.</li> <li>• A new process was also developed setting out clear expectations around communication with all parties involved in ASB cases.</li> <li>• The new process includes agreeing how frequently we will communicate with parties involved in the case.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inconsistent management of ASB</b> ASB cases were not being managed in a consistent manner and did not meet the requirements of our ASB Policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The previous ASB Policy did not reflect the latest sector best practice at the time. The Policy has now been amended (see point above).</li> <li>• We are now not prescriptive over how long cases can remain open.</li> <li>• We introduced new reporting and monitoring for ASB cases, including updated diary sheets.</li> <li>• There has been a review of warning letters.</li> <li>• Our managing agent has recruited a new ASB and Safeguarding Manager to increase the support and oversight of ASB cases.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A central tracker has been developed for managing ASB cases.</li><li>• A new housing management system has been approved and is in development. This will go live in 2025 and allow for more detailed centralised reporting on all aspects of ASB case management. This will improve the knowledge on cases across the organisation, better supporting the Housing team. Moreover, where legal action is required, collating evidence will be more straight forward.</li></ul>
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## **7. Ensuring compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code**

7.1. In March 2025, we reported to our Board that we are compliant with all requirements of the Code.

7.2. This will be reviewed again in 12 months and any material issues that arise before then will be reported to the Board.

7.3. We regularly monitor updates from the Housing Ombudsman. This includes their press releases, spotlight reports and calls for evidence. We also respond to all relevant consultations to support the development of the service.