

## Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024

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### 1. Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman introduced a new Complaint Handling Code on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The code is designed to improve how housing providers manage complaints, ensuring a fair and efficient process for residents. The key aspects are:

- **Clear Guidelines:** The code outlines clear expectations for how complaints should be handled, emphasizing the importance of a structured approach.
- **Accessibility:** It encourages housing providers to make their complaint processes easy to access and understand for all residents.
- **Timeliness:** The code stresses the importance of timely responses, aiming to resolve issues quickly and prevent escalation.
- **Transparency:** Providers are expected to keep complainants informed throughout the process and to explain decisions clearly.
- **Learning and Improvement:** Housing providers are encouraged to learn from complaints to improve services and prevent similar issues in the future.
- **Compliance Monitoring:** The Ombudsman will monitor adherence to the code and can take action against providers that fail to comply.

Overall, the new code aims to foster a more responsive and accountable environment for addressing housing complaints, enhancing resident satisfaction and trust in housing services.

The first task was to complete a self-assessment against the Code. In parallel we completed a review of our Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure documents to ensure compliance with the requirements of the new Code. Both documents are available to view on Harborne Parish Lands Charity's website.

### 2. Complaints

This report outlines our performance in handling complaints during the year ending 30th June 2024. The report aims to provide transparency in our processes and demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement.

There were no findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman.

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During the period 1<sup>st</sup> July Harborne Parish Lands Charity received one complaint, this related to communication. The complaint was upheld. During this time, we did not refuse to accept any complaints.

The complaint was from a resident's family member who was unhappy that they had to remove all items from a flat which had become void following the death of their family member. They complained that during a telephone conversation a staff member was unhelpful and unsympathetic.

### **3. Timescales**

The timescale was adhered to as the complaint was followed up and discussed on the day it was received.

### **Learning from Complaints**

Although we have clear communication in our licence agreement around belongings left in properties, we felt it necessary to produce a new policy and procedure called 'Belongings Left in Properties' to be issued to the next of kin when a flat becomes void to ensure clarity and understanding of the process.

It became apparent that the direct nature of the initial communication did not suit the circumstances.

### **Service Improvements**

This complaint highlighted a gap in our Void Management service which has been remedied by an additional policy to reiterate the necessity for the next of kin to remove all items from a flat when it becomes void.

Also we have introduced a one line of communication route for all next of kin to ensure there are no misunderstandings when following our 'Belongings Left in Properties' procedure.

### **4. Self-Assessment Action Plan**

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The self-assessment showed areas where improvements were necessary to ensure compliance with the new code:

- Further staff training to ensure that all staff are fully briefed on the new Complaint Handling Code and the amendments to our policy and procedure.
- An additional section added to our complaints log so that service requests can be monitored carefully.
- A member of staff has been nominated as the Complaints Officer and a member of the board of trustees has been nominated as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).
- The Complaints Officer will produce a quarterly report for the MRC which will include updates on complaints and service requests. The report will be discussed at the Almshouse Committee Meetings and Board Meetings.

Harborne Parish Lands Charity remains committed to learning from complaints and using them as a tool for continuous improvement. We will continue to monitor our performance closely and make any necessary adjustments.

### **5. Next Annual Reporting Date:**

The next report will be published in September 2025 and will include all complaints between 1st July 2024 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

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