

Housing

Ombudsman Service

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Our role

- ▶ **Our role improves lives and housing services** – providing redress to almost 4.7 million households across 2,316 landlords (331 LAs covering 1.7m homes)
- ▶ **Dispute support** – about 80% of complaints received closed before formal investigation
- ▶ **Dispute resolution** – 2,618 formal decisions in 2021-22 up from 2,185 in the previous year
- ▶ **Proactive Ombudsman** – promoting excellence in complaint handling and sharing learning and insight

Social Housing White Paper

The White Paper recognised that HOS had already taken the following steps to respond to the Green Paper:

- ▶ **‘Complaint Handling Code’ - July 2020**
 - New standards for high-quality complaint handling, promoting greater access and consistency
- ▶ **Revised ‘Housing Ombudsman Scheme’ - Sept. 2020**
 - New power to investigate ‘Systemic’ failures
 - New ‘Complaint Handling Failure Orders’
- ▶ **Internal ‘change programme’**
 - More staff – faster decisions and an enhanced service
 - Continued expansion in 2022/23

Systemic Investigations

- ▶ **Paragraph 50 of the Scheme**
 - Our investigations are usually the result of a complaint from an individual. We may also investigate the root causes that give rise to a significant number of individual complaints.
 - When we have concluded an investigation we may consider whether there is a wider problem affecting a landlord's service delivery to residents or a sector wide issue affecting a number of our members.

Complaint Handling Failure Orders

- ▶ Issued for non-compliance with the Scheme or Code, including:
 - failure to progress a complaint through the procedure or respond within timescales without good reason
 - failure to provide evidence to support investigation by the Ombudsman
 - failure to comply with the Ombudsman's orders

Legislative Changes

▶ **Social Housing Regulation Bill**

- Promotes transparency and awareness
- Statutory MoU with Regulator of Social Housing
- Power to issue a code of practice
- Power to order a review of policies and practices

▶ **Building Safety Act**

- New safety regime for residential buildings
- Building Safety Regulator
- Leaseholder protection from costs
- Removing 'designated person' filter

Complaints about Repairs

▶ Overall complaints

- 65% overall increase in enquiries and complaints received in 21/22 compared to the previous year
- 77% increase in cases entering our formal remit in 21/22 compared to the previous year

▶ Repairs complaints

- 30% of cases determined in 20/21 related to repairs, rising to 34% in 21/22
- Repair orders – 290 in 21/22

Key issues identified

▶ Inadequate records

- Poor record keeping – incomplete or missing logs
- Verbal agreements
- Old records

▶ Missed and unproductive appointments

- Residents wait at home and the operative does not arrive
- Operatives lack the skills, equipment or parts to complete the work

▶ Poor communication and lack of follow up

- Failure to manage expectations
- Check what has been agreed has happened
- Is the resident satisfied?

Complaints about ASB

▶ Overall complaints

- Complaints about the handling of tenant behaviour reports represented 12% of all complaints received in 2021-22.

▶ Key issues

- Adequately managing expectations
- Be realistic about possible outcomes
- Carry out risk assessments
- Recognise and manage vulnerabilities affecting all parties to the dispute.

Complaint Handling

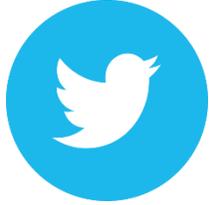
▶ Overall complaints

- Complaints about complaint handling represented 17% of all complaints determined in 2021-22.
- Uphold rate of 66%

▶ Key issues

- Poor organisational culture towards complaints
- Lack of communication between complaints team and others across the organisation
- Unclear policies
- Missed opportunities for learning

Keeping in touch



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