

SHAL's Community Chat (complaints)

Tuesday 26 July 2022

Lee Martin-Scull led the chat about complaints. He talked about the type we receive and how we respond to them. We had a record number of people join in. There were 12 of us!

Background

Lee Martin-Scull is SHAL's Complaints Officer. Last year, SHAL completed a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. We changed our process slightly as a result. There are now 2 stages to our complaints process (we've removed stage 3). The Complaint Handling Code came into effect in April 2022.

The Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice that will allow landlords like SHAL to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. Key areas of the code are:

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- The structure of the complaints procedure - only two stages necessary and clear timeframes set out for responses
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports
- Annual self-assessment against the Code

From April 2020 to March 2022, we received a total of 40 complaints, 8 comments and 19 compliments. 55 of you responded by text message to say you weren't happy with your repair (42% response rate overall and 93% satisfaction rate).

It was agreed to start publishing who wins the monthly prize draw for the response to the text about satisfaction with repairs, the response rate and the satisfaction rate on a monthly basis.

What are the stages?

Stage 1 – the complaint is recorded and is resolved within 10 working days. It won't always be referred to a manager and, in most cases, will be resolved by the person who receives the complaint. If you're not happy with the resolution you can ask for it to be reviewed at Stage 2.

Stage 2 – the Complaints Officer and a member of the Executive team review what's been done and resolve the complaint within 20 working days.

After that, if you're still not happy with how it's been resolved you can refer it to the Housing Ombudsman.

How do I make a complaint?

Talk to us and explain what you're not happy with – and why. It doesn't have to be in writing. You can make a complaint by email, online (including on our website and Messenger), phone or text message.

We talked about the different ways people approach complaints and how we get different results.

Working restoratively

We're committed to:

- Creating a strong community
- Building strong relationships
- Providing quality homes and services
- Including, listening and understanding
- Being transparent and accountable

In addition, our strategic priorities are:

- Embed Restorative Practice across our organisation
- Invest well in our homes
- Support those who are struggling financially

Restorative Practice is a way of “developing community and managing conflict through building, strengthening and maintaining existing relationships plus repairing harm and broken relationships.”

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It's an approach used widely in schools and in the criminal justice system and we think it's a perfect way of embedding our commitments, creating a strong community and building strong relationships.

A number of you recognised this approach from personal and professional experience and it's something we'll pick up on in a future Community Chat. We agreed it was important to be fair in how we respond to things like complaints – and explain how/why it's fair.

Housing Officers

This was Chloe's first Community Chat since joining SHAL. She asked everyone about their experiences and what makes a good Housing Officer. People said it was about understanding and treating everyone as an individual and listening. It's definitely not about being judgemental and "looking down your nose" at tenants.

"I love being a SHAL tenant."

"SHAL are a great landlord and I'm grateful to live here."

Working together

We had some really good feedback and examples of how we do things. We won't always get things right and we won't always agree with each other.

We want everyone to feel able to have that conversation with us, make a complaint if necessary, and work together to agree a resolution in a fair and transparent way.

