



**Board Meeting of Tamil Community Housing Association
Monday 9th September 2024
6.30pm**

Report Title	Annual Review of Complaints 2023-24
Agenda Item	10
Author	Andrew Furtek Chief Executive
Report Type	For Decision and Approval
Date:	12 th August 2024

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This paper provides members with an overview of the complaints TCHA received in the last financial year and our performance in managing responses within timescales and learning from mistakes.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that TCHA is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and that from April 2024 the Ombudsman has regulatory responsibilities for complaints, liaising with, and making recommendations to the Regulator of Social Housing where appropriate.
- 1.3 TCHA did complete a review of its Complaints Policy against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code and this was approved by the Board at its last meeting. There are a number of actions that need to be completed from this review, and they are included in the action plan contained in this report.
- 1.4 TCHA was also required to file a submission with the Housing Ombudsman by 30th June 2024, confirming its annual review of complaints, together with a covering Governing Body response to the annual review. Unfortunately, TCHA failed to meet this date. I have contacted the Housing Ombudsman and agreed an extension for this to 30th September.

2. Overview

- 2.1 Last year, TCHA received seven formal complaints from residents. Six of the complaints related to repairs and maintenance queries, and one related to housing management. Two complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the

complaints process, four are still open and ongoing, and one has been referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Ombudsman has written to TCHA and confirmed they are carrying out an investigation.

2.2 Response times

We failed to acknowledge 5 of the 7 complaints within our published timescale of 5 working days. Our records for responding to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints have not been kept in a methodical way so I am unable to confirm that we responded to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of acknowledgement, or Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days, as per our policy.

2.3 Areas of concern

The following issues were raised from the complaints

- a. Failure to send out rent statements (AGHA)
- b. Failure to complete repairs on time and poor communications
- c. Failure to respond to complaints in line with published timescales
- d. Failure to respond to requests for information
- e. Quality of work completed by contractors
- f. Keeping residents informed
- g. Failure to fix ongoing leak into property
- h. Failure to fix broken heating system in a reasonable time

2.4 Lessons Learned

We have not routinely thought about collecting and reporting on this. In the past year, we have only recorded one lesson learned. We had a situation where a resident's heating failed. Their home was part of a communal heating system and the part that failed was expensive to replace, and had to be ordered from abroad with a 13 week delivery time. This left the resident without heating for an extended period. The Head of Property Services reviewed this complaint and concluded that there was no alternative but to replace the failed unit with a direct replacement. To address the waiting time, TCHA will order an additional two replacement units and keep these in store. In future when a unit fails we will be able to replace it with minimum delay to the resident and we will reorder another unit so we always have two in stock.

2.5 Mitigating Factors

Members will be aware that TCHA has been through a period of significant change, merging with Apna Gar Housing Association in August 2023, and having a number of staff vacancies including a housing officer, head of housing and head of property services, and an interim CEO. These things have all had an impact on the services we have provided and put existing staff under more pressure. We are in the process of stabilising the staff team and this will significantly improve the general quality of service residents will receive from TCHA going forward.

3. Improvement Action Plan

It is clear from the above that TCHA needs to quickly improve its management of complaints handling and resolution. The Action Plan below sets out the measures we will be taking to improve the service and ensure lessons are learned when things go wrong.

	Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	Outcome
1.	Complaints reviewed monthly by SMT to ensure timescales are complied with	CEO	Sept 24		All complaints are acknowledged and responded to within published timescales
2.	All Stage 1 Complaints responded to by Head of Service	SMT	Sept 24		Senior level response to ensure complaints are well managed
3.	All Stage 2 Complaints responded to by the Chief Executive	CEO	Sept 24		Senior level response to ensure complaints are well managed
4.	Whole team quarterly review of lessons learned with report to the Operations Sub Committee	SMT	Oct 24		Support a learning culture, make sure we can demonstrate lessons learned and that changes are made as a result of feedback from residents. Support Governance overview and reassurance
5.	Reprocure key maintenance contracts – this will help to control and monitor performance of contractors going forward	HoPS	Mar 25		Improve responsiveness and performance of contractors
6.	Upgrade our IT system	SMT	Mar 25		The upgraded system will better support case management and communications with residents
7.	Provide training to all staff on expectations around complaints management	SMT	Nov 24		Everyone knows what is expected and how to manage complaints

	Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	Outcome
8.	Update the Complaints Tracker so that it captures all the information we need – once we have upgraded our IT, this will be held in Omniledger	CEO/ Housing Assistant	Sept 24		We have an accurate and fit for purpose tool to monitor and report on the management of all complaints.
9.	We review all our complaint letters to make sure they are providing the correct information to complainants	SMT	Sept 24		Our written responses are consistent and of high quality.
10.	Publish our Annual Complaints Review and Board response to the review on our Website. Complete mandatory complaints return to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 th September 2024 and make sure this is completed by 30 th June in future years	CEO	Sept 2024		Satisfactory completion of mandatory return to the Housing Ombudsman.
11.	Appoint a member of the Board to be the Member Responsible for Complaints. This person should also be a member of the OSC.	Board	Sept		This is a requirement of compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

3.1 Members are asked to Approve the Complaints Improvement Action Plan

4. Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code

4.1 Members should note we are currently non-compliant with four areas of the complaints handling code as follows:

- A. Section 8.1 – requires TCHA to provide an annual review of complaints to the Board
- B. Section 8.2 – requires TCHA to publish its annual complaints review and the Board’s response to this on its website
- C. Section 9.5 – requires the Board to Elect a Member Responsible for Complaints

D. Section 9.6 – requires the nominated Member Responsible for Complaints to ensure the Board is regularly updated on TCHA’s management of complaints

4.2 To address the following areas of non-compliance the following actions are required:

4.3 This report is the annual review of complaints

4.4 Following this meeting, the report will be published on our website

4.5 Members are asked to elect a Member Responsible for Complaints from the Board. The nominated person should also be a member of the Operations Sub Committee (OSC – subject to Board approval).

4.6 The Member Responsible for Complaints will work with the CEO to ensure regular updates on complaints management are provided to the Board, via the OSC.

5. Risks

5.1 Complaints are an essential part of any operation that provides services, and should be seen as an opportunity to learn and improve. Failure to do this can result in reduced resident satisfaction, legal claims and intervention by the Housing Ombudsman. It is clear that TCHA has not had the right focus on complaints in the past and we will move at pace to address this now.

5.2 Members should be aware that failure to complete the mandatory complaints return to the Housing Ombudsman could result in TCHA receiving a Complaints Handling Failure Order by the Housing Ombudsman. This will not be the case this year as the Housing Ombudsman has agreed an extension to 30th September 2024.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Our performance around complaints management has not been as good as we would like it to be. We are aware of the reasons for this and we are taking action to address this going forward, as set out in our Action Plan. Members and residents should expect to see improved results going forward as the impact of the action plan comes into effect.