



**Broadland Housing Association Board**

**Date: 20 July 2021**

**Report originator: Catherine Little, Executive Housing Director**

**E-mail: [catherine.little@broadlandgroup.org](mailto:catherine.little@broadlandgroup.org)**

**Direct Dial: 01603 750293**

## Learning from Complaints

### 1. Purpose of report

1.1 To report learnings from recent complaints to BHA Board.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Board is asked to discuss and note the learnings from recent complaints.

<b>Corporate strategy reference:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frontline services</li> <li>2. Governance</li> </ul>
<b>Operational implications:</b>	The new complaints process is discussed following six months of implementation. This report also outlines operational improvements as a result of complaints.
<b>Risk map references:</b> (There are many risks that could be listed here, but only the top five referenced by their residual scores are provided)	CDR3: Lack of ownership of customer feedback results in increased complaints and reputational damage.  CDR17: Failure to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code leading to reputational damage and increased tenant dissatisfaction.
<b>Climate change implications:</b>	There are no climate change implications arising from the report
<b>Impact on Customers:</b>	This report gives assurance that complaints are taken seriously and sets out how we will continue to improve services for customers.
<b>Equality diversity and inclusivity implications:</b>	A full EIA of our complaints policy was undertaken for the full policy review in November 2020. There are no additional considerations in this report.

<b>Financial implications:</b>	The new complaints approach is leading to a higher spend on compensation and this paper includes the action to improve consistency of compensation.
<b>Value for Money</b> Economy – spending less Efficiency – spending well Effectiveness – spending wisely Equity – spending fairly	This report outlines how learning from complaints can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services, as well as the equity of compensation decisions.

### 3 Background

3.1 The Housing Ombudsman has recently published a guide to *Effective Involvement of Governing Bodies*, available online [Housing Ombudsman Guidance for governing bodies \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/guidance-for-governing-bodies) and in the Resource Area of On Board.

This sets out the expectation that Boards are involved with complaints through:

- Using complaints as a ‘barometer’ around mission, resident focus, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and risk management;
- Promoting a positive complaints culture through compliance, awareness and learning from the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code and other publications;
- Receiving reports on complaints performance; and
- Supporting, challenging and seeking assurance from the Executive around complaints handling.

3.2 Other recent updates from the Housing Ombudsman also provide helpful context around the expectations of the Ombudsman and are available in the Resource Area.

3.3 In November 2020, Board received an update on the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, noted a self-assessment, which is published on BHA’s website, noted revised Complaints and Compensation policies and approved a new Unreasonable Complaints policy.

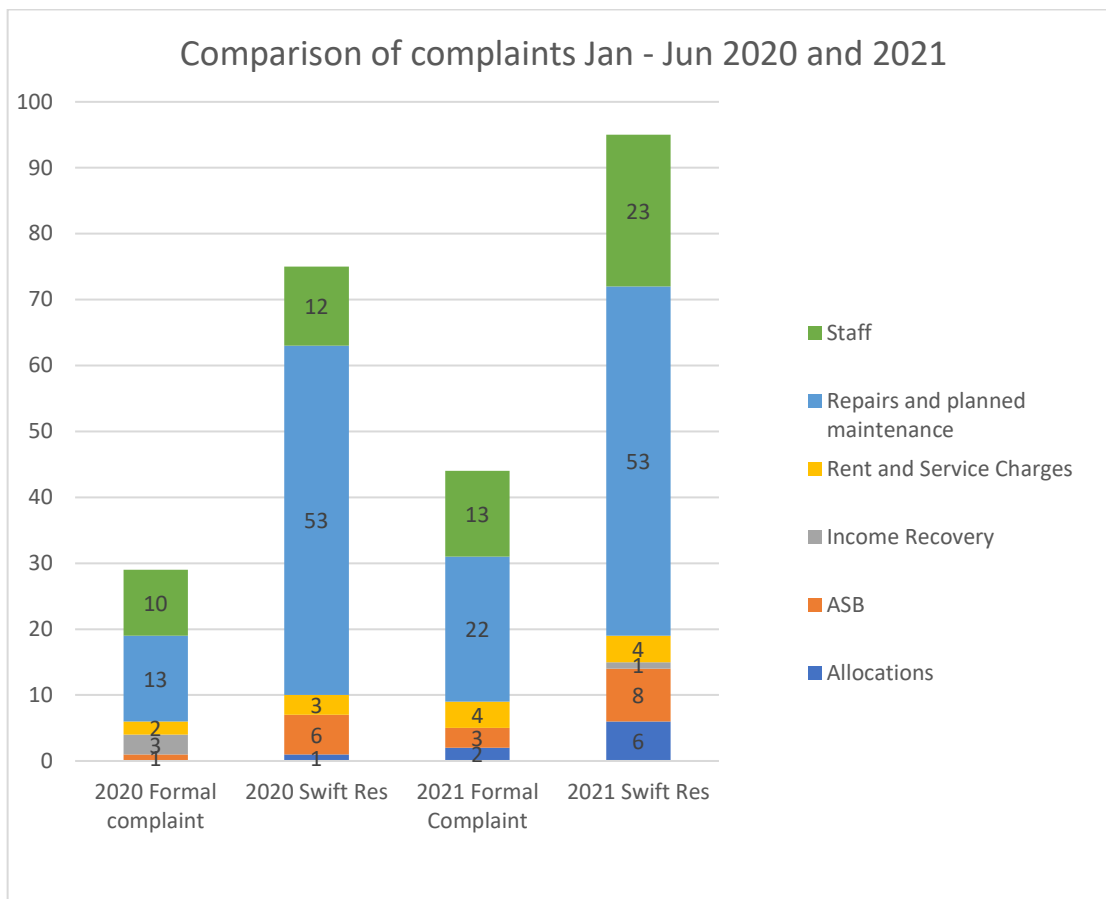
3.4 This report also included learning from recent complaints and committed to six monthly updates. Since then, all staff have been trained and BBS has been updated to reflect the new terminology and procedures. This paper gives a six-month review of complaints and how we have learned from them.

### 4 Complaints received January – June 2021

4.1 Compared with the first six months of 2020, we have seen an increase in Swift Resolutions (previously called Expressions of Dissatisfaction) and an increase in formal complaints. This is positive as it suggests we are improving our recording of dissatisfaction and are escalating complaints appropriately.

4.2 We have seen a particular increase in Swift Resolutions about staff and in formal complaints about repairs and maintenance. There is no common theme in the complaints about staff, but the need for better communication, particularly around ASB and repairs does come through.

There is no particular theme to the repairs formal complaints.



4.3 Nine panel hearings have taken place in the last six months. Of these, three were upheld and four were partially upheld.

These complaints fall into different categories. However, there are some similarities in the findings of the Panels, particularly around compensation.

4.4 To improve customer experience of our complaints process, we are:

- Introducing peer review of complaints investigations and ensuring good quality conversations to explain the outcome of Stage 1 complaints, so that our approach to formal complaints is consistent and fair;
- Updating the Compensation policy so that there is a more realistic timescale for payment.
- Developing an internal log of compensation to sit alongside the Housing Ombudsman guidance, so that we can build up our internal expertise and experience of compensation levels and other actions to resolve complaints.

## 5 Learning from Complaints

5.1 The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Charter sets the expectation that Housing Associations will learn from complaints and publish their findings.

5.2 Leadership Group considered the learnings from individual formal complaints, as well as an overarching action plan which will be published to tenants on BHA's website following review by the Board (included at Appendix 1). The

detailed learnings are being disseminated to relevant staff and the summary learnings will be shared with all staff.

5.3 The main themes of learning from complaints during the six-month period are:

- Improving ASB communication and setting realistic expectations;
- Improving communication when repairs cannot be completed to the expected timescale;
- Improving how we deal with 'Community Complaints' by revising our Complaints Policy;
- Clarifying the timescale for payment of compensation in our Compensation Policy;
- Improving staff handling of complaints, in particular how they are responded to and closed down.

5.4 A review of the schemes with the highest proportion of complaints over the last three years showed that Intermediate rented tenants are disproportionately represented. These complaints have particular links with service charges and standards, and quality and security of communal areas. We have already agreed some changes to Intermediate Rent tenancy agreements and are part way through a review of service charges so that they are more transparent. We will also prioritise consulting and promoting service standards for all tenures.

5.5 We have improvements to make on benchmarking complaints and are in discussions with other Independent East member Housing Associations about sharing complaint numbers, themes, and learnings.

We do not have good enough evidence from the complaint's satisfaction survey due to low returns. We are consulting with recent complainants about how best to measure satisfaction with the process going forwards.

## **6 Conclusion**

6.1 Board is invited to discuss and note the learnings from recent complaints.