WTHP Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Introduction

To ensure compliance against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, Willow Tree Housing Partnership Limited (WTHP) must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, the report includes:

- An annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with the codes requirements.
- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of WTHP's complaint handling performance. This will also include a summary of the types of complaints WTHP has refused to accept
- Any findings of non-compliance by WTHP with this Code by the Ombudsman
- The service improvements made by WTHP because of the learning from complaints
- Any annual report about WTHP's performance from the Ombudsman
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of WTHP

WTHP's annual complaints performance and service improvement report is reported to WTHP's governing body and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The MRC's response is included within the report and the Board will be asked for comments at the meeting on 4 September 2025. The governing body's response to the report will be added to this report after the Board Meeting prior to upload to the website.

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

1. **Annual self-assessment against the Code**
   Attached as appendix A

2. **Analysis of WTHP's complaint handling performance**

Complaint Stage	Number of Complaints	Summary of complaints
Stage 1	87	Outstanding Repairs Damp & Mould Communication Time Taken to complete Rent Issues Heating Grounds Maintenance Compensation

		Staff attitude Contractor's repairs
Stage 2	15	Lack of information and communication from WTHP Contractor's communication Repairs
Refused Complaints	**Summary of complaints**	**Reason for refusal**
2	Repairs to property	Processed as part of 2b separate disrepair claims

3. Findings of non-compliance against the code by the Ombudsman (if applicable)

Number	Detail	Complaint handling failure order given Y/N
	None	

4. Service Improvements made as a result of learning

In November 2024, WTHP employed a Business Improvement Officer on a fixed term temporary contact to identify and implement service improvements across the organisation. One key focus was embedding lessons learned from complaints.

Since October 2024, our CEO and Member Responsible for complaints (MRC) have met 3 times to date, to review a representative sample of Stage 2 complaint responses. To date 6 Stage 2 responses have been reviewed. These independent reviews provide valuable insight into how we handle complaints, ensuring our responses are resident focussed, fair, transparent, and empathetic. The reviews also highlight good practice and identify areas for improvement.

To add further scrutiny to our complaints handling, the same complaints are reviewed anonymously by our Resident Scrutiny Panel, whose feedback is considered alongside that of the CEO and MRC to promote ongoing development and learning.

Complaint detail	**Service Improvement detail**
Repairs taking too long to complete, especially after a complaint causing frustration and escalation	Introduced a weekly review process to track all outstanding jobs, with a focus on any approaching 28 days, to identify delays and take action promptly.
Delays in approving quotes	Implemented a quote review process to ensure quicker turnaround times reduce dissatisfaction.
Delays in responding to visits, repairs and inspections including reported damp and mould should be quicker	Reviewed and updated the Damp and Mould policy to include clear timescales for visits and completion of works

Key documents not saved or accessible on the housing management system	Delivered staff training on correct storage of documents and reports, improving colleagues' ability to locate key information
Staff unaware of open complaints, limiting ability to assist with queries.	Added a visual icon on the housing management system to flag open complaints linked to properties, ensuring all colleagues can locate relevant complaint information.
Complaints require more proactive ownership and follow ups to monitor progress to ensure full resolution of actions, especially around outstanding repairs.	Designated staff contact given to complainant in complaint response, enhanced action tracker management, set clear deadlines, and ensured updates to residents.
Complaints not consistently discussed across teams	Made complaints a standing agenda item at weekly team meetings and contractor meetings to promote transparency and collaborative working.
Poor customer service or unhelpful staff attitude	Delivered customer service training to the Business Support Team and rolled out MGI (Mary Gover Learning) to the whole staff team.
Poor communication	Provided refresher training on the importance of accurately logging all calls and emails, reinforced through team meetings.
Services not tailored to individual needs, including communication preferences and health considerations.	Launched an ongoing Tenant Data Insight project to collect detailed information about residents and their households, enabling services to be better tailored to individual needs and preferences once complete.

5. Ombudsman's Annual Report on WTHP (if applicable)

Number	Detail
	N/a

6. **Reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of WTHP (if applicable)**

Number	Detail
	N/a

7. **WTHP's governing body's response to the WTHP's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report**

Governing Body / MRC's comments response

As the designated Member Responsible for Complaints for Willow Tree Housing Partnership (WTHP), since commencing my role, I have met with our CEO, Donna Johnson, on three occasions to review 25% of Stage 2 complaint responses. Over the year ending 31 March 2025, we have reviewed six Stage 2 responses in total.

My role as MRC is to provide assurance to the Board that WTHP demonstrates a positive complaint handling culture, manages complaints effectively and fairly and uses insights from complaints to improve services across the organisation. I can confirm that complaints are being handled in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. A key observation from the first year of reviews is that, where staff knowledge gaps or training needs were identified, these were addressed promptly, reducing the likelihood of similar complaints arising in the future. I can also confirm that trends and themes from complaints are being identified, acted upon, and used to inform service improvements and wider organisational learning.

As has been the case for many other social landlords, the number of complaints received has increased for 2024/25. However for WTHP, whilst the number of Stage 1 Complaints received increased by 36% from 2023/24 to 2024/25, the number of Stage 2 Complaints received decreased by 35%.

Complaint Stage	Total 2023/24	Total 2024/25
Stage 1:	**64**	**87**
Stage 2:	**23**	**15**

Considerable work has been undertaken across the organisation to improve complaints handling, and complaints continue to be prioritised. As part of the reviews, we also review the associated Stage 1 Responses. While our Stage 2 responses are of an excellent quality, over the next year, Stage 1 responses will be an area of focus to ensure the same level of quality and consistency.

The Housing Ombudsman promotes 4 Key principals for complaint handling; Timely, Transparent, Tailored and Tone.

I can confirm that WTHP seek to handle complaints in a **timely** manner and in accordance with timescales laid out in the Complaint Policy. Complaint responses are **transparent**, clearly outlining actions, the reasons behind decisions, timescales and the status of ongoing matters. With regard to responses being **tailored** and demonstrating the right **tone,** this will be an area of focus for improvement over the next year. In particular, we need to ensure that stage 1 responses consistently reflect a personal approach and demonstrate genuine empathy as well as professional style.

While complaints can be challenging, they are an important way for residents to have their voices heard. How we respond to them defines our culture and by using complaints as opportunities for learning, WTHP can look to provide a better service to our residents.

Board Meeting Minute 4 September 2025: -
The Board noted the self-assessment submission against the HO Complaints Handling Code and approved the Annual Complaints performance and Service Improvement report.