

## **YORKSHIRE HOUSING**

### **BOARD MEETING – 29<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009**

Report of Tim Bright – Policy Co-ordinator

#### **COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS** **ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORT 2008-09**

**(FOR SCRUTINY AND DISCUSSION)**

##### **Report Summary**

To provide details of activity and performance relating to Complaints and Compliments made by customers during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 08 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 09, a summary of which is as follows:

1. During the period a total of 860 complaints and 181 compliments were received. This compares to 380 complaints and 157 compliments being recorded for 2007/08.
2. The increased number of complaints in 2008/09 is mainly attributable to a wider awareness and use of the feedback database for recording and tracking complaints.
3. 751 complaints were resolved during the six month period (compared to 259 in 07/08).
4. YH continues to resolve the majority of complaints during the early stages of the procedure, with 96% resolved at Stage 1 (this was 89% in 07/08).
5. Brunel Housing with 163 received the highest number of complaints, whilst the highest number of Compliments were recorded by Craven Housing (34) and Brunel Housing (33).
6. Whilst there is some variation between teams the largest number of complaints were in respect of Service Delivery issues.
7. A total of £7,244 was paid out to customers during the year as compensation in connection with complaints. In the year 2007/08 the total figure was £4,349.82, however it would appear that the increase, at least in part, can be attributed to better recording rather than staff being more generous with compensation.
8. Evidencing how we learn and improve as a result of complaints and other feedback from customers continues to improve and several examples of this are detailed on page 16 of this report.

## **1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Board members are invited to discuss and comment upon the analysis of performance and activity relating to complaints and compliments information contained within the report.**

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 As a listening and learning organisation YH encourages feedback from all our customers and stakeholders whether positive or negative, so that we may learn and improve. Indeed the policy, procedures and processes for learning from this area of feedback is a vital aspect of our overall feedback strategy and as such should be seen as integral to this.
- 2.2 Whilst we aim to provide excellent services to our customers, as with any organisation we recognise that on occasions things will go wrong and customers expectations may not be met.
- 2.3 Having a fair, open and transparent process for dealing with customer complaints is not only considered good practice for housing associations but is a certain expectation of our regulator the Tenant Services Authority, as well as the Audit Commission.

## **3.0 PERFORMANCE & ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 At Annex 1 are a series of tables detailing activity and performance breakdowns of the feedback (both Complaints and Compliments) received by organisations/ teams within Yorkshire Housing. These can be found on the 'members' area of the YH Website.
- 3.2 There have been more complaints logged in 2008/09 (860) than there were in 2007/08 (380). However this should not necessarily be seen negatively as the effective logging and handling of complaints has been reinforced throughout this period, both by managers and by the Policy Co-ordinator via delivery of refresher training sessions to individual teams in order to address concerns/ weaknesses. Complaints is therefore now a much higher profile within YH as it has been previously and in addition, as already referred to, there is now a group wide database for the logging of feedback.
- 3.3 Reflecting the figures referred to in 3.2 above, more complaints were also resolved during 2008/09 than in 2007/08 (751 against 317).
- 3.4 Further performance and analysis information is provided at Annex 2 to this report.

#### **4.0 CAUSES OF COMPLAINTS**

- 4.1 Analysis of the Feedback Database regarding the main reasons why customers are making complaints, show that 58% of complaints relate to repairs and maintenance services and 30% to Housing Management services. There is perhaps no great surprise here as they are the two key service delivery areas for customers.
- 4.2 These complaints are then broken down further and are detailed at Annex 3.

#### **5.0 USING THE FEEDBACK DATABASE**

- 5.1 Whilst use of the database does appear to be good in general, there are two areas of concern:
- a. Too much personal information is being entered on to the system, for example staff names being entered in addition to specific allegations made by customers. This could breach data protection obligations and certainly breaches guidance provided to staff on the appropriate use of the database.
  - b. Complaints are not always being routinely closed down on the system when the case is actually resolved. This can then show as if more complaints are unresolved than there actually is and also that complaints are taking longer to resolve than they are in reality.
- 5.2 To address the above issues the Policy Co-ordinator will issue a reminder to staff on YoHo and also ask that managers reinforce good practice in these areas via Team Meetings.

#### **6.0 COMPLAINTS HANDLING - FEEDBACK FROM CUSTOMERS**

- 6.1 Following closure of each complaint a phone call is made in order to gauge the customers satisfaction with the complaints handling process. This takes the form of just two questions; an overall score out of 10 and how the customer feels we can improve. This is consistent with our YH wide survey strategy. Adopting this methodology, as opposed to the previous method of sending out postal surveys has increased response rates from 17 in Apr to Sep 08 to 153 in the period Sep 08 to Mar 09.
- 6.2 Of the complainants contacted almost a quarter (23%) gave a score of 9 or above, 75% gave a score of 8 or below and 2% declined to give a score.
- 6.3 Regarding the areas customers said we need to improve, in priority order these are:
- ☞ Communicating with the customer during the complaints process – 48%
  - ☞ Speed with which the complaint was resolved – 13%
  - ☞ Ensuring the complaint is dealt with by the correct person – 8%
  - ☞ Not taking the complaint seriously enough/ being 'fobbed off' – 7%
- 6.4 The Policy Co-ordinator has already made changes to the content of the corporate complaints training in order to address these issues for new starters. However

these comments also need to be taken on board by all teams in order to improve complaints handling.

## **7.0 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

7.1 One area where we have made improvements across YH is in the area of how we learn and improve as a result of complaints from our customers and it is encouraging that we can evidence improvements in service deliver and/ or changes we have made resulting in positive outcomes for our customers as a direct result of dealing with and learning from complaints, examples of these are attached at Annex 2.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 For the avoidance of doubt, this is the risk assessment **after** taking account of any controls in place, including any controls proposed within the paper. This section to include key risks and actions take to mitigate risk.

<b>Category</b>	<i>Risk category</i>
<b>Impact</b>	6
<b>Likelihood</b>	4

This gives a risk figure of 24 (Low Risk).

### **8.2 Justification of risk assessment**

8.2.1 It is vital that YHG has robust processes for measuring performance and activity in relation to complaints in order to ensure that we are providing a customer focussed service. The risk of not dealing with customers complaints well may result, not only in the reputation and business effectiveness of YH suffering but also tenants and customers may go elsewhere for rehousing and this may impact on our ability to deliver key operational plan objectives.

The impact has therefore been assessed as 6.

8.2.2 This is unlikely to happen as we have robust procedures and processes in place and carry out checks such as audits to ensure that the complaints procedure is being adhered to and complaints handled effectively.

The current likelihood is assessed as 4 (unlikely to happen within 10 years).

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Comments, Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Procedure and Feedback Database ensures that feedback from our customers is logged in respect of age, disability and ethnicity and our performance and activity in this area is monitored and reported.
- 9.2 Whilst we have a group wide policy and procedure, the approach we take is to treat every case on its own merits and to strive to reach a solution based on the individual circumstances. This allows issues such as vulnerability and special needs to be fully taken account of when looking to reach a solution.

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

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**COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY APR TO SEP 08 INC.**

**TABLE 1 – NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN THE PERIOD BY TEAM**

	Brunel	Craven	RH Central	RH East	YMH North	YMH South	YMH West	Development	Investment	Building Services	Programme Maintenance	YH Help Desk	Support Works	Space	My4Walls	Foundation	Home Ownership	Swarcliffe PFI	Yorkshire Housing - Other	Total
<b>Total 2008/09</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>860</b>
<b>Total 2007/08</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>380</b>

\*2007/08 figure was reported within YH 'other' heading.

**TABLE 2 - % BREAKDOWN BY TYPE**

	Brunel	Craven	RH Central	RH East	YMH North	YMH South	YMH West	Development	Investment	Building Services	Programme Maintenance	YH Help Desk	Support Works	Space	My4Walls	Foundation	Home Ownership	Swarcliffe PFI	Yorkshire Housing - Other
<b>Policy %</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>				<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>				<b>33</b>		<b>36</b>
<b>Staff Attitude%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>			<b>13</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Service Delivery %</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>45</b>

**TABLE 3 - PROFILE OF COMPLAINANTS BY ETHNICITY, GENDER AND AGE**

	Asian/Asian British Other	Bangladeshi	Black African	Black Caribbean	Black Other	Chinese	Indian	Mixed White & Asian	Mixed White & Black Caribbean	Pakistani	White British	White Irish	White Other	Mixed Other	Other Ethnic Group	Refused	Not Known
<b>Total % 2008/09</b>	1			1.5					1	2	67	1	2		.5	2	22
<b>Total % 2007/08</b>	1		.5	.5	.5				3	2.5	61.5		2			1	25.5

	FEMALE	MALE		16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	75 plus	Not Known
<b>Total % 2008/09</b>	60	40	<b>Total % 2008/09</b>	7	16	16	10	9	8	5	29
<b>Total % 2007/08</b>	61	39	<b>Total % 2007/08</b>	4.5	19.5	11.5	11.5	6	3	8	52

**TABLE 4 – COMPLAINTS RESOLVED IN THE PERIOD BY TEAM AND STAGE**

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Housing Ombudsman	<b>Total 2008/09</b>
Brunel	157	5	1	0	163
Craven	58	4	0	0	62
RH Central	37	0	0	0	37
RH East	42	3	0	0	45
YMH North	83	3	2	0	88
YMH South	84	4	0	0	88
YMH West	42	3	0	0	45
Development	10	1	0	0	11
Investment	2	0	0	0	2
Building Services	58	1	0	0	59
Programmed Maintenance	14	0	0	0	14
YH Help Desk	32	0	0	0	32
Support Works	27	0	0	0	27
Space	17	0	0	0	17
My4Walls	7	0	0	0	7
YH Foundation	21	0	0	0	21
Home Ownership	4	1	2	0	7
Swarcliffe PFI	14	0	0	0	14
Yorkshire Housing Other	10	2	0	0	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>751</b>

**TABLE 5 – AVERAGE TIME TAKEN TO RESOLVE COMPLAINTS, BY TEAM**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Resolution Time (days)</b>
Brunel Housing	41
Craven Housing	44
RH - Central	19
RH - East	37
YMH - North	48
YMH - South	56
YMH - West	40
Development	86
Investment	13
Building Services	51
Programmed Maintenance	39
YH Help Desk	65
Support Works	24
Space	24
My4Walls	37
YH Foundation	73
Home Ownership	70
Swarcliffe PFI	39
Yorkshire Housing - Other	51

**TABLE 6 - COMPLAINTS RESOLVED IN THE PERIOD SHOWING  
TOTAL TIME SPENT AND COMPENSATION PAID**

	<b>Total Time Spent 2008/09</b>	<b>Total Time Spent 2007/08</b>	<b>Compensation Paid 2008/09</b>	<b>Compensation Paid 2007/08</b>
Brunel	240	3hrs 30mins	£638	£234
Craven	197		£417	
RH Central	24		£30	£681
RH East	56		£107	£245
YMH North	238	5hrs	£1,267	£644
YMH South	110	1hr	£1,206	£126
YMH West	65	17hrs	£272	£60
Development	45	5mins	£190	
Investment	4	50mins		
Building Services	47	2hrs	£1,575	£1,600
Programmed Maintenance	10		£600	
YH Help Desk	24		£160	
Support Works	32		nil	
Space	23		£190	
My4Walls	7		£250	
YH Foundation	19	10mins	nil	
Home Ownership	56		£200	
Swarcliffe PFI	20	16hrs 20mins	£142	£540
Yorkshire Housing Other	7		nil	£220

TABLE 7 - COMPLAINTS TAKING LONGER THAN SIX MONTHS TO RESOLVE

Department/ Team	Case Number	Date Reported	Date Resolved	Comments from Manager
Building Services	95	7 Feb 08	22 Dec 08	Following problems with repairs to the gas boiler visits were made to this customer and offers of compensation made. However after consideration the offers were refused and the customer advised they were taking further advice regarding their complaint. The case was therefore held open longer than it normally would have been to provide the customer with the opportunity to do this.
My4Walls	405	27 May 08	25 Apr 09	<p>In this case the delay was down to the re-leveling of the floor in their flat. There was a dispute with the contractor over liability which took time to resolve and the leveling of the floor was also not a standard defect.</p> <p>Fortunately the matter is now resolved to the customers satisfaction.</p>
Brunel Housing	110	12 Feb 08	3 Mar 09	Following initial reporting of the complaint repairs were ordered but not completed by the contractor. Monitoring of the case was poor and this resulted in the failure not being picked up by YH until the customer informed us some months later. Once aware of the problem some initial "quick win" works were done in agreement with complainant and the remainder of the more substantial works were postponed until after Christmas and into the new year so as not to inconvenience elderly tenant - with customers agreement.

TABLE 7 – COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED IN THE PERIOD BY TEAM

	Brunel	Craven	RH Central	RH East	YMH North	YMH South	YMH West	Development	Investment	Building Services	Programme Maintenance	YH Help Desk	Support Works	Space/ My4Walls	Foundation	Home Ownership	Swarcliffe PFI	Yorkshire Housing - Other	Total
<b>Total 08/09</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Total 07/08</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>					<b>2</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>157</b>

## PERFORMANCE AND ANALYSIS

Resolving complaints to the customers satisfaction at Stage 1 has improved from the previous years figure with 96% being resolved at the first stage (against 89% for 07/08). A further 3.5% were resolved at Stage 2, meaning that less than 1% of all complaints were not resolved prior to progressing to Stage 3.

We are able to report not just at what stages we are resolving complaints but how quickly. This does show some discrepancies across YH, ranging from the average time taking to resolve cases in Development of 86 days to just 19 days in RH Central. The average time reflects the date from opening to closure, including when complaints progress from one stage to the next.

The profile of customers making a complaint remain broadly similar to those in 2007/08, however it is encouraging that the number of 'not knowns' has further reduced in the ethnicity and age equality groups. Early in 2009 the facility to record sexuality, disability and faith were added to the Feedback Database and therefore figures for these groups will be included in the next report.

Brunel Housing once again received the highest number of complaints with 163 during the year. A large proportion of these (104 or 64%) were made in the first six months of 2008/09 and directly relate to the repairs service and the problems being experienced with the contractor Connaught at that time. It could also reflect the fact that the need to record feedback from customers has been reinforced to staff within the team on a number of occasions by the Area Manager.

Craven Housing had the highest recorded number of compliments with 34, closely followed by Brunel Housing with 33.

CAUSES OF COMPLAINTS

**Repairs and Maintenance Complaints**

- 37% Repair took too long to complete
- 20% Poor quality of repair/ not completed to customers satisfaction
- 14% Failed appointment
- 12% Attitude or conduct of staff or contractor

**Housing Management Complaints**

- 26% Attitude/ conduct of staff
- 19% Dissatisfaction with the ASB service
- 18% Dissatisfaction with rent and/or service charges (inc. recovery)
- 16% Communication issues between YH and customers
- 8% Dissatisfaction with housing application/ lettings functions

This analysis provides the organisation with valuable information regarding where efforts need to be focused to improve satisfaction with the delivery of services from a customer perspective.

## LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

### YH Foundation

Through a Disabled Facilities Grant funded by the Local Authority, a ramp to a main access door was constructed for the benefit of the private tenant (the client) and following usual YHF procedures.

Following completion of the work a complaint was received from the landlord of the property regarding the colour of handrails and dimensions of the ramp. The client had signed all relevant paperwork but had not included the landlord in any decision regarding the aesthetics or dimensions of the ramp and YHF procedures only required the landlord to sign an authorisation form, which didn't include detailed drawings or colours.

Following the complaint it was agreed to amend the landlord authorisation form to include more details of the proposed work and to make it clear that the landlord is responsible for obtaining more details from the client prior to grant work starting, and by signing the form they agree to this.

### Brunel

The Brunel Housing team found themselves receiving several complaints where the customer was stating they did not receive call backs from staff following messages left via the admin team.

In response to this the team implemented a process whereby the admin team would keep a log of messages emailed to the Housing Officer/ Surveyor etc and they would then notify the admin team once the enquiry had been dealt with so that the log can be updated.

This ensures that enquiries are dealt with quickly and efficiently and a record kept in case of customer complaint.

### Craven Housing Association

Following an unusually high complaints received by the Homelessness & Advice Service, primarily around staff attitudes and a rigid approach to implementation of procedures the Area Manager and Housing Options Manager met with the Team and the following actions have been taken:

1. Refresher training has been delivered for staff on such as Priority Groups.
2. The Craven Housing/ Craven DC Lettings Policy has been reviewed and robust guidance for staff developed in respect of medical /welfare assessments
3. Staff training delivered around interviewing skills, dealing with difficult customers, and giving "bad" news in a positive way.
4. Improving the quality of the information that we provide to customers about vacancies and waiting times.
5. Training for front line reception staff.

### Space Property

Following complaints received the following actions have been taken:

1. It has been reinforced to Contractors that they have to call customers if they cannot make an appointment, with a realistic estimated time.
2. Procedures have been put in place to ensure that all potential buyers are informed about sub market rents before the properties are put on any websites.

### YMH North

Following complaints received the following actions have been taken:

1. Meetings have been held with the principle contractor, Connaught Baldwins, in order to feedback customer complaints/ feedback and improve the repairs service in the area. In some cases compensation has been agreed, where service failure was serious.
2. Following complaints of unsatisfactory work relating to the repair of garage doors and uPVC windows by the principle contractor, specialist contractors have now been appointed to undertake this type of work. The result of this is that in the majority of cases jobs are now being completed on first visit and to a higher standard than previously and yet at no additional cost to YH.

### YMH West

Following complaints received the following actions have been taken:

1. Cleaning rota's have been reviewed and changes made in order to improve service delivery.
2. Final closure letters are now sent by recorded delivery after a complainant alleged not to have received the final response to their Stage 1 complaint.

### RH Central

Following a complaint received from a customer alleging unprofessional behaviour by a member of staff (discussing non-work related matters in a visit to a customers home), staff in the team were briefed on best practice in this area and reminded of the requirement to be careful about the content of any non-work issues which are discussed with customers.

### Investment:

1. Due to feedback from customers regarding new light bulbs being difficult to change, new fittings were sourced for future works of this nature.
2. As a result of a complaint about investment work not being done whilst property was void, we have put in place processes to ensure we can be much more proactive whilst on site in adjusting the programme to complete investment work whilst properties are empty.