

## **CESSA Housing Association Member Responsible for Complaints – Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report as at 31 December 2024**

As detailed in the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Code of Practice, the Association's Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) is required to have Governance oversight on behalf of the COM of all complaints received within the previous period. To, therefore satisfy this, the Association's Complaints Officer, the Director of Housing (DoH), after each quarter (31 March, 30 June & 30 September) *during* the year (even if nil returns), will provide a written report on formal complaints received. A final written report, (provided below) is then submitted to the MRC at the end of each financial year in advance of the required complaints analysis submission to the HOS, which in 2025 is due by 21 March.

DoH is able to confirm that the Association is compliant with the HOS Code of Practice and that, in anticipation of needing to meet the Code from 2024 onwards, policy T01H – CESSA HA Complaints had been updated and approved by the Association's Housing Committee in March 2024. This was made available to tenants via their scheme's Tenants Information folder (generally held for reference purposes in communal lounges). The policy is also published on the Association's website, along with the Tenant's Annual Report 2024. The latter contains an analysis and explanation of Complaint performance for the previous year, together with detailed performance charts for the Regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures submitted in April 2024 for the preceding financial year (2023).

In detail, DoH is able to advise the following:

- Complaint Response Times:** Receipt of Stage 1 & Stage 2 complaints should be acknowledged within 5 working days and responded to within 10 working days of their acknowledgement.  
  
In 2024 all complaints and service requests were acknowledged by the end of the next working day following their receipt and received a final response within 6 days of the date they were received (well within the target time of a further 10 working days).  
  
Although HA's policy T01H - Complaints (in line with HOS guidelines) does not require there to be a formal acknowledgement and response time for tenant service requests, these were, without exception, also immediately acknowledged and responded to within 6 days of the request being made.
- Stage 1 Complaints:** In 2024 there were 3 Stage 1 expressions of tenant dissatisfaction. One complainant objected to receiving a letter following proven harassment of a fellow resident; another complained about the actions of a member of staff from a care agency who had on several occasions put soiled bedding in the washing machines without removing the soiling first. The NOK and HA submitted a written complaint to the agency concerned and HA also raised a safeguarding alert with Adult Social Care, and the issue has not reoccurred since. The final complaint was from a resident who was concerned at what they felt was HA's lack of action with getting the garden outside their flat tidied up. This was satisfactorily dealt with by raising with another tenant who had asked to garden in the area, with the satisfied complainant subsequently writing a letter of 'thanks' (see '5' below).
- Stage 2 Complaints:** There were no Stage 2 complaints in 2024.
- HOS Complaints:** While no complaints were escalated to the HOS in 2024, on 9 October it became apparent that in July 2023 (unbeknownst to the Association) a 2023 Stage 2 complaint about HA's refusal to allow viewing of CCTV footage had been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman's Service. It also transpired that HOS had found themselves unable to investigate the case (it fell outside of their jurisdiction). It is worth highlighting that, even had HOS found themselves able to investigate, the Association's records would have shown that procedures had been followed and that, at HA's instigation (because the footage *could not* be viewed by the complainant for GDPR reasons), the Police had viewed the footage in April 2023 confirming the previous feedback given to the tenant's NOK, who had then thanked the Association for its help.
- Service Requests:** There were 8 service requests in 2024. These were around: Information on the weekly service charge cost of communal areas; permission to install a free-standing bath in a flat's

shower room; concerns about noise; flat access and CCTV recording of themselves in the communal corridors; a reminder that someone wished to receive electronic communication only and concern that, due to anticipated staff absence for the festive bank holidays over the Christmas period the fire alarm had (unavoidably) been tested twice in a week.

6. Expressions of Thanks: In 2024 there were 5 letters of thanks. These were for: Resolving a previously complained about garden issue; the provision of heat protective window film fitted in their flat in 2023; advice and support provided during a period of illness; the reduction in service charges at Glamis Court in 2024 and the helpful provision of H&S information by HSM at a scheme H&S briefing.
7. HOS Self-Assessment Compliance: DoH has completed the 24-page self-assessment form (attached) and is pleased to report that the Association's policies and procedures comply with the HOS' Code of Practice. The 3 Stage 1 complaints received in 2024 were also compliant, with the exception of a delay in escalating a tenant's service request to a Stage 1 complaint (as highlighted at '8' below). It is also notable that many of the self-assessment questions were about Code of Practice requirements that were irrelevant to the 3 complaints raised.

The Association is, however, currently non-compliant with the Code requirement that HA's include a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:

- a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;
- b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and
- c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body."

Current strategic and frontline operational objectives were agreed in March 2024, prior the HOS Code of Practice coming into force in April last year. The Association's Strategic Objectives are also due for review in 2025 and it is recommended that these are, therefore, updated accordingly. Operational Objectives are reviewed annually and agreed by the Housing Committee at their March meeting. This objective will be added for 2025 as a Business as Usual item.

Once reviewed by the MRC, the self-assessment will be uploaded to the CESSA HA website for tenants; information. The self-assessment will also be submitted on the HOS' online portal by the deadline date of 21 March. Note that in order to meet HOS requirements, the Tenants Annual Report for 2024 has already been uploaded together with revised policy T01H – Complaints (attached for information and slightly tweaked in February 2025 to ensure full compliance with the Code).

8. Lessons Learned: There were no particular lessons to learn from the 3 formal complaints received in 2024. However, one 2024 service request had taken longer to respond to than expected due to it having been accompanied at the same time by a subject access request (SAR). Pulling all the information together for a SAR to ensure that the confidentiality of others is protected takes a great deal of time and significant staff resource and, because both the service request and SAR were associated, the latter had then received priority. This had meant that, although it had been acknowledged 2 days after its receipt, the service request was finally answered 21 working days later. Due to their dissatisfaction with what they had been told, the tenant then raised their concern as a Stage 1 complaint for further consideration.

It was apparent that during the service request the tenant making it had not been sufficiently kept apprised of what was happening and when they might expect a response. Therefore, staff dealing with service requests have been reminded to contact tenants submitting service requests or a complaint on a weekly basis to keep them updated, (even if there isn't anything new to report). Information on an anticipated response date should also be provided at the same time.

Gill Peckham  
Director of Housing

17/02/2025



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3 March 2025

In my capacity as the board member with responsibility for complaints I have reviewed the report prepared by the Director of Housing, Mrs Gill Peckham and I am very grateful to her for her diligence in preparing this as well as the swift action by her and her Scheme Managers in addressing the concerns of tenants.

Over the whole of 2024, across all five sites owned by CESSA HA, there were only three Stage 1 complaints, none of which had to be escalated to Stage 2. In addition, there were eight service requests.

My conclusions are as follows:

1. All service requests / complaints were swiftly acknowledged within the requisite period and invariably the same day.
2. With one exception, the complaints were minor in nature.
3. Almost without exception they were resolved quickly and satisfactorily and well within the mandated response time. Only one took the full period of 10 working days to achieve a resolution but only because it was necessary to engage with another tenant and so no time limits were exceeded.
4. All issues were resolved to the satisfaction of the tenant making the complaint.

I note with satisfaction that there were in addition five letters of thanks, which the Director of Housing was very pleased to receive, and which were passed to the Scheme Managers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. E. H. Ackroyd".

C E H ACKROYD  
Director



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