



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 18TH SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS – CAERPHILLY HOMES

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on contacts in relation to complaints and representations received by the Authority's Housing Customer Services Section from 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The monitoring of complaints and representations is carried out to provide information on the level of satisfaction with the service provided by Caerphilly Homes. The results enable Managers to focus on areas of concern to improve services and monitor performance and ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future. This year has seen a change in the complaints procedure with more emphasis on learning from complaints. There have been examples of complaints which have led to changes in policies and procedures and these are explained in the report.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Corporately, Complaints and Representations will link to the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives 3 and 4, and also to themes in "Caerphilly Delivers", the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The annual report is based on information collected during the financial year 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014. In April 2013 the Council implemented a new two stage corporate complaints policy for complainants to follow. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint it can be progressed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This policy was based on guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and replaced the previous 3 stage policy.

4.2 Overall Numbers

In addition to recording Stage 1, Stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints, Caerphilly Homes Customer Services Section also records any service requests received directly by the Customer Services Section and any housing related correspondence received by the Chief Executive. Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014 the Customer Services Section of Caerphilly Homes recorded a total of 437 contacts from the public and/or their representative. This is in comparison with 520 between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013.

4.3 The number of contacts received via an advocate was 148. Examples of the type of advocates used include MP, AM, Councillors, other tenants and family members.

4.4 Praise and Thanks

Records are also kept of any praise or thanks received by Caerphilly Homes. In 2013/14 there were 43 recorded. This is in comparison with 27 for 2012/13. These covered a number of service areas, as detailed below, with noticeable increases for rents, response, repairs and WHQS:-

<u>Praise or Thanks</u>		
Type of Contact	2012/13	2013/14
Rents	8	15
Allocation	3	0
Leaseholder Services	5	0
Housing Management	3	1
Responsive Repairs	4	13
Tenancy Enforcement	1	1
Tenant Participation	1	1
Sheltered Housing	1	4
WHQS	1	7

4.5 Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints

4.5.1 Stage 1 of the complaints procedure offers the opportunity for the complaint to be resolved at the point of service delivery. These complaints are referred to the appropriate manager for any necessary action and response. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 they are advised how the complaint can be progressed to Stage 2. Alternatively, complainants can request their complaint is escalated straight to a Stage 2 investigation. In addition, where an appeals procedure is in place, this must be exhausted before progressing to a Stage 2 complaint. Stage 2 complaints are investigated by the Customer Services Section on behalf of the Head of Service.

4.5.2 During 2013/14 there was a total of 81 Stage 1 complaints and 28 Stage 2 complaints, recorded for Caerphilly Homes. Of the 28 Stage 2 complaints 13 had progressed from a Stage 1.

4.5.3 As detailed in the table below the majority of Stage 1 complaints related to response repairs. Only 1 of these cases was not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction and progressed to a Stage 2. An analysis of the Stage 1 response repair complaints shows that they were in relation to a variety of aspects of the service including quality of service provision, quality of workmanship, timescale involved in completing repairs, attitude of contractor and failure to keep appointments. However, to put these figures into perspective it should be noted that Housing Repair Operations completed 36,994 response repairs during the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014.

4.5.4 The Stage 1 complaints recorded for WHQS (internal works) related in general to the quality of service provision, refusal to fit new kitchens and the size of the baths being fitted. The majority of these cases were resolved at Stage 1 and only 4 of these complaints progressed to Stage 2. Again, to put these complaints into perspective it should be noted that over 800 properties underwent improvements under WHQS during this period.

4.5.5 The 11 Housing Management Stage 1 complaints related to a number of issues such as landlord consent, gardens, housing land and successions.

Function Area	Stage 1	Stage 2	Progressed
Response Repairs	23	2	1
WHQS (Internal)	16	4	4
Housing Management	11	13	4
Allocations	6	3	1
Leaseholders	7	1	0
Grants	3	1	0
Planned Maintenance	3	1	1
Anti Social Behaviour	2	0	0
Heating	2	1	0
Sheltered Housing	2	1	1
WHQS (External)	2	0	0
Adaptations	1	0	0
Enforcement Action	1	1	1
Homelessness	1	0	0
Rents	1	0	0
Total	81	28	13

4.5.6 The majority of Stage 2 complaints related to the Housing Management function. These included issues involving gardens/trees, recharges, kitchen layout, succession, refusal to grant landlord's consent and housing land.

4.5.7 The 4 WHQS (internal) Stage 2 complaints all related to requests for new kitchens to be installed, which had previously been refused on the basis the current kitchen met the WHQS.

4.5.8 Of the three Stage 2 complaints recorded against Allocations, two related to the length of time applicants had been on the Council's Housing Waiting list and the remaining case related to the type of property allocated to an elderly couple.

4.6 Outcome of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints (Feb to March 2014)

4.6.1 As of 1st February 2014 it is a requirement that the outcome of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints must be recorded as not upheld, partially upheld or upheld. The table below shows the outcomes recorded for the 17 Stage 1 complaints and 3 Stage 2 complaints recorded between 1st February 2014 and 31st March 2014.

Function Area	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld
Stage 1			
Response Repairs	4	1	1
WHQS (Internal)	0	0	7
Anti Social Behaviour	1	0	0
Sheltered Housing	1	0	0
Grants	0	1	0
Stage 2			
Response Repairs	1	0	0
Grants	0	1	0
Housing Management	1	0	0

- 4.6.2 There were seven WHQS (internal) Stage 1 complaints upheld. Five of these related to the installation of new kitchens, which resulted in new kitchens being fitted. One related to the size of the bath that had been fitted which resulted in the bath being changed. The remaining case was in relation to the way operatives parked their vehicles while carrying out WHQS works, which resulted in operatives being reminded to park legally and safely. The response repair Stage 1 complaint upheld was in relation to a chimney repair which resulted in an apology for an administrative error.
- 4.6.3 The Stage 1 response repair partially upheld was in relation to the replacement of windows, which resulted in some windows being renewed. The partially upheld stage one complaint for grants related to corrective works required by the contractor who returned to carry out some remedial works.
- 4.6.4 There were no Stage 2 complaints upheld during this time. The Stage 2 complaint partially upheld related to the standard of works undertaken through a disabled facility grant. Some remedial works were carried out and an apology given for any inconvenience caused, however, this case has now been referred to the Ombudsman and the outcome will be reported in next year's annual report.

4.7 Ombudsman Complaints

- 4.7.1 There were five cases referred to the Ombudsman during 2013/14. This is in comparison with seven during 2012/13. In four of these cases the Ombudsman decided not to investigate. The remaining case is currently being investigated by the Ombudsman and the outcome will be reported in next year's report. The case is in relation to the length of time an applicant has been on the waiting list without receiving an offer of accommodation.

4.8 Response Target Times

- 4.8.1 The Customer Service Section monitors the performance in responding to all contacts recorded by the section, within the corporate timescales. In 2013/14, 88% of complaints and representations were responded to within the agreed timescales compared with 90% in 2012/13. An analysis of the figures shows the reduction is due to the introduction of the new corporate complaints system, with shorter response deadlines for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. Stage 1 complaints have a response target of 10 working days and Stage 2 complaints have a response target of 20 working days, compared with the previous timescale of 28 working days. Officers are now more aware of the new timescales involved and it is hoped this percentage will increase next year.

4.9 Learning from Complaints

- 4.9.1 Complaints are used as a means of analysing the service provided by Caerphilly Homes and highlighting any areas for improvement or any necessary changes in existing policies and procedures. During 2013/14 the following changes were made:
- 4.9.2 One of the Housing Management complaints resulted in an amendment to one of the standard letters within the Recharge procedure. A further Housing Management case resulted in a review of the standard letters within the succession procedure.
- 4.9.3 In relation to WHQS works, some of the changes to date include tenants being provided with an Improvement Guide booklet, at the start of the process, which details the extent of the works to be carried out and exactly what tenants can expect to experience. In addition, when the works are completed a visit is carried out by the Tenant Liaison Officer to undertake a final "sign off" of the works to ensure there are no outstanding issues. Tenants are also now provided with an "aftercare" booklet providing useful tips including how to look after their new kitchen and bathroom.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any complaints received by Caerphilly Homes that contain alleged discriminatory aspects to them are dealt with jointly by Caerphilly Homes and the Equalities and Welsh Language Team to ensure that the allegations are investigated thoroughly and appropriately in line with both the complaints process and the requirements of the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Consultation responses have been considered within this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 This report is for information purposes only.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The monitoring of complaints forms part of the process to monitor performance and continuous improvement for Caerphilly Homes.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts.

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