



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:**  
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**Report of:** Ajman Ali, Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services  
**Report to:** Housing Policy Committee  
**Date of Decision:** 20 June 2024  
**Subject:** Sheffield City Council's Submission to the Regulator and Housing Ombudsman

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA 272		
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		

### Purpose of Report:

The Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing have both introduced new statutory reporting requirements for all social housing providers. These are:

- The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment
- The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

This report provides the Housing Policy Committee with an overview of the reporting requirements for each of these areas and outlines Sheffield City Council's proposed response to both the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing prior to the submission deadlines on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**Recommendations:**

That the Housing Policy Committee:

- Notes the outcomes of the complaints self-assessment against the Code in Appendix A
- Notes the contents of the Complaints and Service Improvement report in Appendix B
- Notes the Council's TSM performance scores as set out in Appendix C
- Provides any comments or feedback on the proposed submissions contained in this report

**Background Papers:**

Appendix A – Sheffield City Council Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment 2023-24

Appendix B - Complaints and Service Improvement Report

Appendix C – Sheffield City Council Tenant Satisfaction Measures 2023-24

Appendix D – Sheffield City Council Summary of Survey Approach

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: Helen Damon
		Legal: Rebecca Lambert
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan
		Climate: Nathan Robinson
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	Ajman Ali
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	Cllr Douglas Johnson
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Chris Ellison	<b>Job Title:</b> Director of Housing
	<b>Date:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) have both introduced new statutory reporting requirements for all social housing providers. These are:

- [The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment](#)
- [The Regulator of Social Housing's \(RSH\) Tenant Satisfaction Measures \(TSMs\)](#)

1.2 This report presents to the Housing Policy Committee, the intended submissions from Sheffield City Council to both the Housing Ombudsman and the RSH. The next sections of this report provide the Committee with an overview of the reporting requirements and highlights key areas for the Committee to note.

1.3 The RSH adopts a co-regulatory approach to its work. It sets both economic and consumer standards designed to help it to deliver its statutory objectives. Responsibility lies with the boards and councillors of registered providers to deliver the outcomes of the standards. Boards and councillors of registered providers should have robust mechanisms in place to provide them with assurance that their organisation delivers the outcomes of the standards. The Strategy and Resources Policy Committee has the lead role for monitoring of the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice and performance on complaint handling. The Housing Policy Committee is accountable for the Council's performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the Consumer Standards.

## **2 The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment**

2.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out how it expects social landlords to manage customer complaints, describes best practice and supports landlords in responding to complaints effectively and fairly. It was introduced in July 2020 and updated further in April 2022 and more recently in March 2024.

2.2 The updated Code is now a statutory requirement, meaning social landlords must assess their complaints handling against the Code by 30<sup>th</sup> June each year and publicly share the outcomes. Sheffield City Council have already been voluntarily working to the Code since it was introduced in 2020.

2.3 The self-assessment must also be accompanied by an annual "Complaints and Service Improvement" report. This is included as Appendix B. The contents of this report are prescribed by the Code. A

public response to both the assessment and improvement report documents by the organisation's governing body must be published on the website. It will be the role of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee to approve this as the lead Committee for managing complaints and is on their agenda for July.

- 2.4 Officers from the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service, Repairs and Maintenance Service and Customer Services have undertaken this year's self-assessment over the last 3 months. This has involved reviewing policies, procedures, information provided to customers, training materials, customer satisfaction data and performance information – to assess how well we comply with each element of the Code.
- 2.5 In total, there are 72 elements within the Code, and we measure well against the requirements with a high degree of compliance. Our complaints policies, procedures and principles are in line with the Code, our tenants have access to clear and comprehensive complaints information, staff are suitably trained in handling complaints, and we put things right.
- 2.6 Of the 72 requirements, there are two against which we don't perform as well as we would like to - relating to the time taken to respond to complaints at Stage 1 and at Stage 2. The new targets for these came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and we don't yet have the first quarter's performance figures. However, based on the performance in 2023/24, we know we must make improvements in this area.
- 2.7 A lot of work is being done to address timescales. Fortnightly complaints surgeries are held, led by a Head of Service and Complaints Manager, and complaints are discussed on a case-by-case basis and a way forward agreed to resolve them as quickly as possible. Performance is monitored on a quarterly basis, and complaints coordinators receive a daily report of their open complaints so they can liaise with Investigating Managers to quickly and effectively issue a response.
- 2.8 This work has had a positive impact on timescales performance, with quarter 4's figures (Jan – Mar 2024) showing a marked improvement. This will continue to be a key focus over the coming months, and we hope to be able to report further improved performance in the first report of 2024/25.
- 2.9 An action plan is in place which not only addresses the gaps identified by the self-assessment, but also aims to further improve our complaints handling performance. The focus of the action plan is to:
- i. Improve the time taken to respond to complaints.
  - ii. Improved capture, reporting, and learning from complaints.
  - iii. Improved customer satisfaction with complaint handling.

This action plan is overseen by a Complaints Subgroup (sub-group of the

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Board), which is made up of managers and Heads of Service from Housing, Customer Services and the Repairs Service.

- 2.10 The full self-assessment and improvement report can be found at Appendix A.

### **3 The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

- 3.1 Sheffield City Council, alongside all social housing providers will be required to submit performance data on a suite of performance indicators or Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) determined by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). This will be the first year of providing this data to the RSH.
- 3.2 The TSMs are intended to increase visibility of landlords' performance to help tenants hold their landlords to account. There are 22 TSMs in total, including 12 tenant perception measures and 10 management information measures. The TSMs have been prescribed by the RSH and all social housing providers must provide the same information and adhere to the prescribed methodology when submitting performance data.
- 3.3 Appendix C that accompanies this report, provides an overview of our scores for 2023/24 against all 22 TSM measures. These are the scores that will be submitted to the RSH by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Following June's deadline, all social housing providers TSM scores will be published online by the RSH.
- 3.4 A summary of the survey approach we used to generate our tenant survey TSMs can be found in Appendix D. Housing Policy Committee have received regular performance reports throughout 2023/24 which show performance against the TSMs, and this information is provided to tenants and published on the Council website.
- 3.5 To increase the transparency of our performance reporting in line with regulatory requirements, we have worked with Viewpoint, the social enterprise who undertake satisfaction surveys on our behalf, to develop an interactive TSM dashboard that tenants and Members can access. The dashboard shows our monthly performance scores against the 12 perception survey measures. The dashboard can be accessed via the [housing performance page](#) on the Council's website. Access to the dashboard will be promoted with tenants over the coming months through our usual engagement channels such as the [Housing & Neighbourhoods Facebook page](#) and our monthly tenant e-bulletin – Your Home, Your Neighbourhood.
- 3.6 TSMs will be reported on a quarterly basis as part of the housing and repairs performance report to the Housing Policy Committee over the

coming year. Selected TSMs are also included in the Council Plan performance reporting framework.

#### **4. How Does This Decision Contribute?**

- 4.1 Completing the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's code, sharing the outcomes and taking actions to address the gaps identified, demonstrates a clear commitment to effectively handling and learning from housing-related complaints. It also contributes to the Council's 'People' policy driver, as outlined in the Council Plan and our commitment that "We will listen, involve and work with the people of our great city"
- 4.2 Regular performance monitoring enables us to identify how well we are performing against the TSMs and identify areas for improvement. TSM performance also feeds into the Council Plan, specifically the strategic outcomes "[Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)" and "[People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)".
- 4.3 Both complaints and TSM work is important in terms of the new Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and contributes to meeting the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. It also helps us achieve our aim of ensuring that complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly and performance information can be accessed in a more open and transparent way.

#### **5. Has There Been Any Consultation?**

- 5.1 Officers from the Housing and Neighbourhood Service, Repairs and Maintenance Service and Customer Services team have worked together to draft the complaints self-assessment. Feedback on complaints handling from our regular Tenant Satisfaction Surveys has also been considered as part of the self-assessment.
- 5.2 Once the self-assessment has been approved by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee, it will be published on the Council's website and to residents via our usual communications channels (e.g., tenant newsletters and our Facebook page). We will consult with the new Communications and Tenant Satisfaction Panel and seek their views on how we can improve how we manage and learn from complaints.
- 5.3 Tenants have been informed about changes in regulation and about the introduction of the TSMs thorough out 2023/24. Performance information has also been shared throughout the year via our monthly tenants e-bulletin (Your Home, Your Neighbourhood) as well as via the Housing & Neighbourhoods Facebook page. Tenants feedback was captured as part of our response to the RSH's initial consultation on the TSMs in 2023.

5.4 In May 2024, we launched a new tenant panel - [Communication and Tenant Satisfaction Panel \(CATS\)](#). The Panel gives Council tenants the opportunity to help monitor TSM performance and provide feedback on how tenant satisfaction could be improved. The Panel will also help to monitor our complaints performance and ensure we follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

## 6. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

### 6.1 Equality Implications

6.1.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report. A key requirement of adherence to the Housing Ombudsman's Code is that all complaints are handled consistently and fairly, regardless of who has submitted them. The Code also requires us to facilitate reasonable adjustments in how we deal with complaints where the customer requires this. Therefore, adherence to the code promotes equality and fairness in how we deal with complaints.

6.1.2 A summary of the survey approach we used to generate our tenant survey TSMs can be found in Appendix D. This demonstrates that the survey methodology used provided a representative response to the satisfaction questions across the whole of our tenant population. This is strong evidence that services are being provided in a fair and equitable way to all customers.

### 6.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

6.2.1 There are no financial or commercial implications arising from this report.

### 6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State under section 51 of and Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1996. The Act requires social landlords, as defined by section 51 (2) of the Act, to be members of an approved scheme. It is mandatory for all local authorities and registered social housing providers to be members of the Ombudsman Scheme.

6.3.2 The new Housing Ombudsman's "Complaint Handling Code" became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that Landlords are now obliged by law to follow its requirements. Section 40 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduces this statutory provision by amending Schedule 2 (2) (1) to the Housing Act 1996 to include additional items 11A-11C. These additional schedule items read as follows:

***'Schedule 2 - Social Rented Sector: Housing Complaints***

***(Section 51)***

***2. Matters for which scheme must provide***

*(1) A scheme shall not be approved for the purposes of this Schedule unless it makes provision for - ...*

**11A**

*A power of the housing ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the scheme should have in place for considering complaints against them.*

**11B**

*A duty of the housing ombudsman to consult –*

- (a) The Regulator of Social Housing,*
- (b) Members of the scheme, and*
- (c) Individuals who may make complaints under the scheme, before issuing, revising replacing any such code*

**11C**

*A duty of the housing ombudsman to monitor compliance with a code of practice described in item 11A that it has issued.'*

6.3.3 One of the other key changes introduced by The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (2023 Act) are the RSH, new Consumer Standards which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The new Consumer Standards form a key part of the new regulatory framework for Social Housing. They set out the outcomes that landlords must deliver so that homes are decent, safe and well-maintained and to ensure that tenants receive quality services from their landlord and are treated with fairness and respect.

6.3.4 Section 193 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (HRA 2008), as amended by Schedule 5, Part 1, paragraph 17 of the 2023 Act provides the RSH with the powers to set standards relating to consumer matters that registered providers must meet. Section 193 (1) states:

*'The regulator may set standards for registered providers as to the nature, extent, safety, energy, efficiency and quality of accommodation, facilities or services provided by them in connection with social housing.'*

6.3.5 An original suite of 4 consumer standards were initially introduced in 2012. These were the Home Standard, the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Tenancy Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. Amendments were then made to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard in 2017 and then in 2022 the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard was introduced.

6.3.6 The Social Housing White Paper, '*The charter for social housing residents*' set out changes to the consumer regulation role to strengthen



the accountability of landlords for maintaining good quality homes and services, prioritising safety, treating residents with respect and being transparent organisations. One of the significant changes undertaken by the RSH following the publication of the Social Housing White Paper was to develop a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures that social housing landlords must report on. The new Tenant Satisfaction Measures were first published by the RSH in September 2022 at the same time as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard was introduced. With Landlords being required to collect data for tenant satisfaction measures from April 2023.

6.3.7 Other key changes have now been implemented through the 2023 Act by introducing important changes to the RSH's objectives and powers. These include amendments to the economic and consumer regulation fundamental objectives which guide the RSH's approach to regulation made under section 1 of the 2023 Act which amends section 92K of the HRA 2008. They also include a new power to issue a code of practice on the consumer standards this has been introduced by section 23 of the 2023 Act which amends section 95 of the HRA 2008. Previously the RSH could only issue a code of practice on its economic standards, this amendment extends this provision under section 195 in order to allow the RSH to issue a code of practice for any of its standards, ensuring that there is parity between economic and consumer areas of regulation. A public consultation was undertaken in respect of the revised new consumer standards between 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Following the outcome of the consultation the new Consumer Standards came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The 4 new Consumer Standards are:

- 6.3.8
- **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – which requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes
  - **Safety and Quality Standard** – which requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants
  - **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account. This standard incorporates the Tenant Satisfaction Measures requirements.
  - **Tenancy Standard**- which sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and for how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords

6.3.9 The new **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** incorporates the published requirements on TSMs and now replaces the original Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard introduced in September 2022. This new consumer standard requires all registered providers including local authorities to meet the RSH requirements in relation to the tenant satisfaction measures set by the regulator. These requirements are detailed in the following RSH guidance documents which contain significant information as to how TSMs must be defined, calculated and reported:

- [Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Technical Requirements.](#)
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Survey Requirements.

#### 6.4 Climate Implications

6.4.1 There are no climate implications arising from this report.

#### 6.4 Other Implications

6.4.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

### 7. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

7.1 Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code and publication of the outcomes and accompanying report, are a requirement of all social housing landlords. Reporting of TSMs is also a statutory requirement for all social housing landlords, therefore no other alternatives were considered.

### 8. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated authority to monitor housing performance including complaints to ensure the service is delivering for tenants.