

## Housing Leeds response to Tenant Scrutiny Panel Complaints Inquiry Recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Action	Owner	Timescale
<p>Make 'informal' contact to appease complainants early in the process</p>	<p>1. This is something that works very well in Adult Social Care. In this service, personal contact is promoted to investigating officers (either telephone contact or, preferably, face to face) at the earliest point possible in the complaint investigation. Evaluation in this service shows that investigating officers applying this approach are those who have escalations to Stage 1, and more complaints converted to enquiries.</p> <p>In this service this approach happens 'in practice' as it is a message that has been communicated by senior officers, as a way of reducing the number of complaints that are escalated.</p> <p>2. The Ombudsman Liaison Officer suggested circulating a 'Dispute Resolution' document produced by the Housing Ombudsman, to be cascaded to investigating officers. This promotes a customer driven approach, rather than a 'tick box' process to dealing with complaints.</p>	<p>1. Senior Managers in Housing Leeds to request that their investigating officers adopt the approach of making informal contact early in the process and work with the DCRO to monitor its impact on preventing complaints from escalation</p> <p>2. Julie Davidson to send to Housing Ombudsman guidance to cross Service DCOs who are then required to cascade to their investigating officers and monitor its impact</p>	<p>1. Jason Kirk, Jill Wildman and David Longthorpe</p> <p>2. Julie Davison and DCROs</p>	<p>1. As part of service review (approx. April 2014)</p> <p>2. January 2014</p>
<p>Consider having a different team dealing with Stage 1 and 2 complaints to introduce a level of independence.</p>	<p>3. There is a mixed approach to this across the different LCC services. This is an approach that was previously adopted by Adult Social Care but did not prove to be effective. This was largely down to the reluctance from other managers to commit their time to taking on an investigation not involving their own service area.</p> <p>In this service now a large proportion of the Stage 2 complaints are 'commissioned' out for a third party to investigate. There is a budget of £30k available to accommodate this.</p> <p>In the waste management service the complaint is escalated upwards through the tiered structure however in the</p>	<p>3. Where a DCRO or investigating officer identifies there is potential for the customer to view a Stage 2 response from the same team as subjective, request that a Stage 2 investigating officer from a different part of the city but from within the same service area investigates at Stage 2.</p>	<p>3. DCROs and Investigating Officers</p>	<p>3. As part of service review (approx. April 2014)</p>

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	<p>Environmental Action Service, Stage 2 is often dealt with by a different locality, thus raining the service knowledge, but making it more independent in terms of the relationships of staff involved in the investigation. It was suggest that this approach could more easily be adopted in Housing, as the former ALMOs come together.</p> <p>It was suggested that there needs to be a flexible approach to this according to the nature of the complaint. For example, if it is a complaint following a decision being made relating to policy or permissions, e.g. a customer not happy that they have been declined a new boiler, it is more likely that the customer would be reassured at stage 2 if their response was investigated by somebody independent of the initial decision maker (i.e. avoid using their line manager as the Stage 2 investigating officer in this instance).</p>			
<p>Apologise for a service failure/failure to remedy at Stage 1</p>		<p>3. Develop a 'checklist' to guide Stage 1 and Stage 2 investigating officers and that this is included in the 'checklist'</p>	<p>4. DCROs</p>	<p>4. As part of service review (approx. April 2014)</p>
<p>Share incidents between Mears/Morrison and LCC where complaints are made direct to contractor</p>				

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<p>LCC and Mears/Morrison need a clearer reporting structure. The onus is on LCC to ensure they get this as the customer and they need to be clearer in their expectations.</p>				
<p>Ensure policy of telephoning complainants is adhered to</p>		<p>Ensure this is incorporated into the checklist for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Investigating Officers</p>	<p>DCROs</p>	<p>As part of service review (approx. April 2014)</p>
<p>Wording of feedback needs to be Plain English and have the 'personal touch'- consider introducing a checklist of points that must be covered by officers dealing with complaint responses with associated training rather than cutting and pasting from</p>		<p>Ensure this is incorporated into the checklist for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Investigating Officers</p>	<p>DCROs</p>	<p>As part of service review (approx. April 2014)</p>

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model letters				
Provide One Stop Centre Staff with an overview of the new complaints arrangements arising from the Localism Act		Guidance to be circulated to Customer Services Officers via team leader briefings to ensure that frontline CSOs basic knowledge of the procedure	Julie Davison	April 2014
Clarify procedure for written complaints accessed through One Stop Centres and other outlets and provide a form for complainants to fill in based on the online form	This has already been actioned	N/A	N/A	N/A
The 10 working day response time should not be lost and consider extending this deadline to all Council services	<p>Some services including Environmental Action Service and Environments and Housing, felt that this is unachievable at this stage based on current challenges to meet performance against the 15 day timescale. In particular this is challenging for services in which the investigating officers work shifts, or job share with other staff, as this limits the DCRO's 'access' time to that particular officer. Other instances where DCROs envisage this would be difficult with dual issue complaints. Services are concerned that this change in timescale is likely to result in an increased number of holding responses.</p> <p>All services agreed that they could aspire to a 10 day timescale</p>	Housing Leeds to maintain their 10 day performance target	Jason Kirk, Jill Wildman and David Longthorpe	As part of service review (approx. April 2014)

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	and there is no reason why internally Housing Leeds cannot retain this internal performance indicator to maintain their performance, with the Council's 15 day indicator as a 'back stop'.			
Evidence of how complaints contribute to service improvement requires review		Implement review of how complaints analysis feeds into service improvement, including how these improvements are communicated to tenants	Jason Kirk, Jill Wildman and David Longthorpe	As part of service review (approx. April 2014)
Existing systems for recording how complaints have contributed to service improvement need to be shared generally with tenants (e.g. through the newsletter)		See above	See above	See above
Internal communication around how AVH/Housing Leeds learn from complaints needs improvement		See above	See above	See above
While response		Ensure that all literature	Andrew	March 2014

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<p>letters contain information about the new system, written advice on how to complain is out of date in this aspect.</p>		<p>regarding the complaints process for housing is up to date at all customer access points, including the website</p>	<p>White/Julie Davison</p>	
<p>Protocols need to be clear and consistent especially where a number of service areas are involved, with a view to having the fewest number of officers involved as possible</p>		<p>Review protocol for dealing with complaints that span more than one team and provide specific training on this for Investigating Officers</p>	<p>DCROs</p>	<p>April 2014</p>
<p>Focus needs to consistently be on solving matters at as early a stage as possible, which may require a review of how they are handled at One Stop Centres</p>		<p>Training for OSC staff regarding when enquiries should be dealt with as a complaint and when there may be an opportunity to resolve as an enquiry</p>	<p>Andrew White</p>	<p>April 2014</p>

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