

Title: Complaints Handling Performance

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Meeting Date: 22 Jan 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The service wishes to update the Board on activity related to the management of complaints, specifically:
- a) Updated complaints performance for Quarter 2 2024/25 to include September and latest position for Q3 (October and November 2024) including some further analysis of Q2 complaints broken down by type and Housing Management area
 - b) A reminder of Ombudsman activity and latest position for October and November 2024 and our learning from complaints
 - c) Update on recent Tenant Scrutiny Board recommendations
 - d) Our wider complaints management activity
 - e) A statement from the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

2. Performance update

A summary of the services performance broken down into most recent four quarters is below:

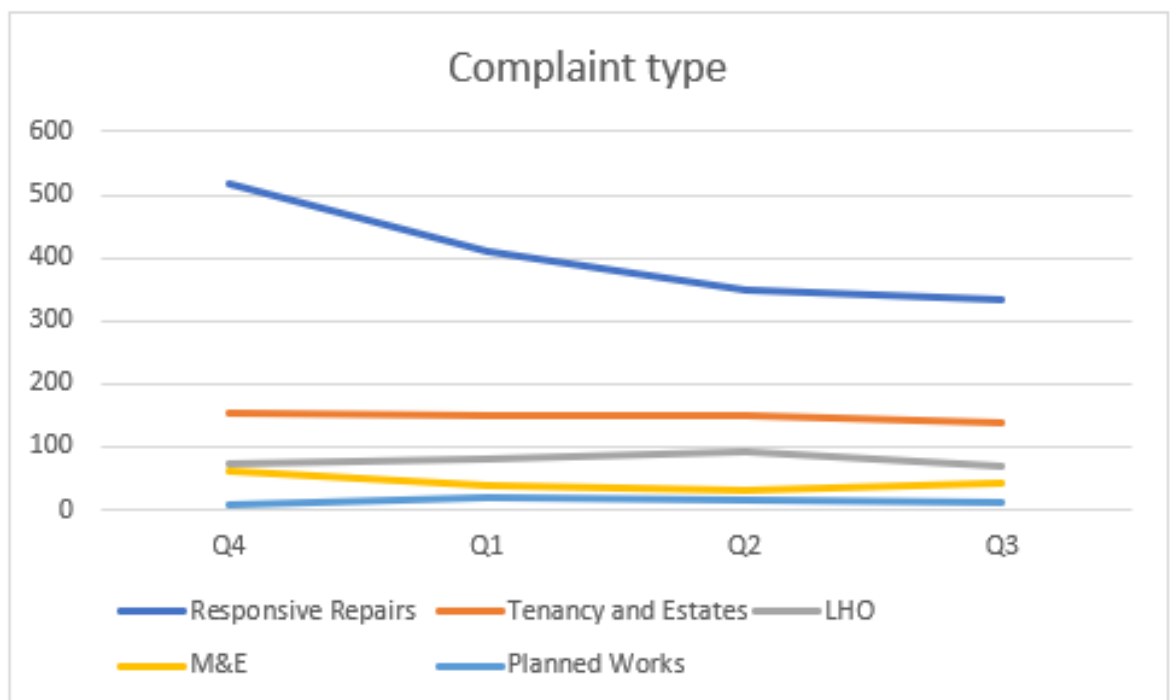
Indicator	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3*
Stage 1 complaints received	696	631	557	388
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	668	590	529	543
Stage 1 responded in code (10 working days or with an extension)	87.5%	90%	95%	95%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	73.2%	82.7%	93%	88%

Indicator	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3*
Stage 2 complaints received	173	168	137	82
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	136	139	143	134
Stage 2 responded in code (20 working days or with an extension)	90.8%	93%	96%	96%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	63.4%	88.5%	92%	81%

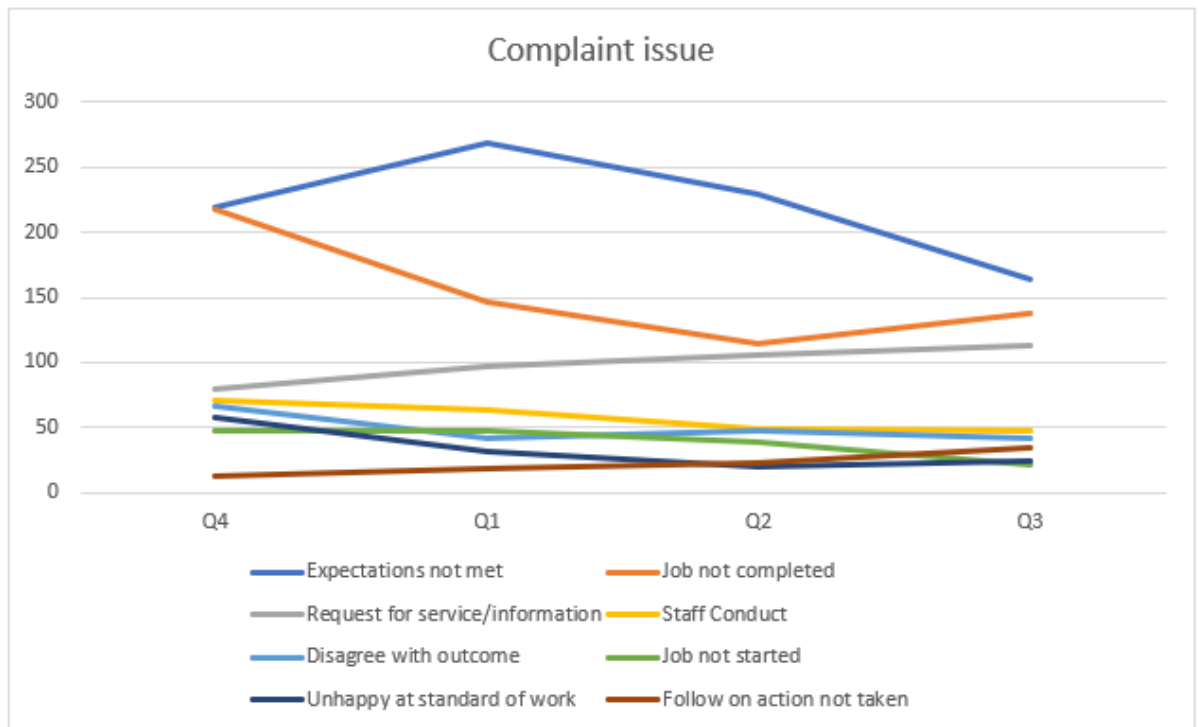
* 24/25 Q3 performance currently only includes October and November 2024.

- 2.1. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (or TSMs) performance related to complaints will be provided to the board separately.

- 2.2. Performance since the last update to the Board in November remains positive, maintaining high levels of response rates for Stage 1 and 2 complaints. December data available to date suggest the final Quarter 3 performance is in line with the previous year.
- 2.3. The total volume of complaints per month generally rises in the Autumn and Winter with a gradual decline in Spring to Summer. When analysing the volume of complaints received, at Stage 1 and 2, these are relatively consistent in the last three years. 2020/21 was impacted by the pandemic and 21/22 saw higher volumes coming out of this, but in each of the last three years 654, 675 and 694 complaints have been received. This is a slight upward trend; however, the increase is gradual and may in part demonstrate the impact of the Complaint Handling Code and the additional promotion of the complaints process to residents this has driven.
- 2.4. The most common complaint type remains those which relate to our day-to-day repairs and maintenance service, reflecting the volume and nature of the activity undertaken, having completed over 204,000 repairs during 2023/34.
- 2.5. The below table shows complaint volumes by type in the last 12 months.



- 2.6. For each complaint received, we record the main issue in terms of what has led to the failure or complaint being received.



2.7 Looking further into the complaints received in Quarter 2, the main complaint types are:

LBS	Q2	Asset Management	Q2	Housing Management	Q2
Joinery	23%	Gas	14%	Staff Conduct	16%
Plumbing	19%	Plumbing	12%	ASB	14%
Damp/Condensation	11%	Joinery	10%	Communal Issues	9%

LBS	Q2 23/24	Asset Management	Q2 23/24	Housing Management	Q2 23/24
Joinery	20%	Roofing	11%	Staff Conduct	17%
Plumbing	16%	Gas	10%	ASB	15%
Damp/Condensation	14%	Inspection	9%	Property Conditions	10%

LBS	Last 12 months	Asset Management	Last 12 months	Housing Management	Last 12 months
Joinery	20%	Gas	17%	Staff Conduct	17%
Damp/Condensation	17%	Damp/Condensation	15%	ASB	13%
Plumbing	14%	Roofing	11%	Rent/arrears	10%

2.8 Within Leeds Building Services (LBS) joinery complaints remain the most common, being 23% of those received. This is consistent with Quarter 1 and the last 12 months overall. Common classifications of Joinery complaints were where a customer was unhappy with the standard of work (expectations not met) and jobs not completed. 52% of complaints were upheld and 14% partially upheld, lower than the LBS Q2 average of 67% upheld.

2.9 Plumbing complaints remain the second most common area of complaints for LBS at 16%. This is again consistent with Q1 and a little higher than the 12-month average of 14%. As with Joinery, incomplete repairs, and

unhappiness at the standard of work were most common. The uphold rate was above the Q2 average at 80% upheld and 12% partially upheld.

- 2.10 Damp and condensation related complaints were also a common type of complaint at 11%, but comparatively lower than Q2 last year, 16%, and the last 12 months of 17% which is positive.
- 2.11 Overall, 16% of complaints within LBS escalated to Stage 2, and was highest in relation to UPVC (33%, 3 of 9). Of the areas receiving more complaints, escalation rates were highest for roofing related complaints (24%, 4 of 17). Escalation for joinery related complaints was 16%, Plumbing 14% and Damp/Condensation 20%, potentially reflecting the complexity of some damp and mould complaints that may be a combination of property repairs being required and advice and support on how to manage/help reduce the amount of moisture in the home.
- 2.12 Within the responsive repairs service (those repairs not managed by LBS), plumbing complaints were the most common, at 17% of all complaints. The number of plumbing complaints received has increased from Quarter 1 to 2, from 10 to 22. Most commonly customers raised dissatisfaction with the quality of work.
- 2.13 Joinery was the second most common area raised. The number of joinery complaints is unchanged from Q1 and is lower than Q3 which saw a peak of 28 cases. Common issues raised in Joinery complaints varied, though common themes look to include unhappiness with work completed and repairs not commencing.
- 2.14 Roofing was the third most common area raised in complaints, however the number of complaints received reduced from 27 in Quarter 1 to 19 in Quarter 2. The most common cause of complaint was incomplete work, which was the most common classification on roofing complaints in the last 12 months overall.
- 2.15 The overall escalation of responsive repairs complaints was 37%, with the greatest escalation from Stage 1 to 2 being in relation to roofing complaints (58%) and Damp/Condensation (55%). Escalation of Plumbing cases (the most common area of complaint) was 38%.
- 2.16 Within Housing Management, staff conduct was the most common cause of complaint in the last year and remains consistent in Quarter 2. One third of these complaints were upheld, which is a reduction in the proportion from nearly half of complaints being upheld in the previous year.
- 2.17 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) was a concern in 13% of cases, the same as the last 12 months overall and has reduced slightly from Quarter 1 where 15% of cases referenced ASB. ASB complaints were commonly categorised as customer's expectations not being met. Housing Management is planning to undertake analysis of ASB related complaints to consider if there is any service wide learning actions, such as policy or

training.

2.18 Complaints about 'communal issues' were the third most common complaint type, however, half of these were classified as a 'request for service/information' and 85% of communal issue complaints were not upheld.

2.19 Following a previous query by the board, the table below shows the breakdown on the number of complaints received in proportion to the size of the local housing management area.

Housing Office	Cases Q2	Complaints per 1k units - Q2	Complaints per 1k units – last 4 Qtrs
Kirkstall	14	3.8	17.0
Moortown	13	4.5	19.3
Wetherby	13	5.7	16.3
Bramley	11	3.8	10.6
Little London	11	4.7	10.7
Wortley	11	4.5	18.4
Horsforth	10	2.8	11.9
Beeston & Holbeck/City & Hunslet	9	2.2	10.1
Burmantofts	8	1.9	8.8
Middleton	8	3.9	14.5
Pudsey	8	3.3	9.5
Armley	6	2.3	6.1
Gipton	5	1.8	8.3
Halton Moor & Osmondthorpe/Swarcliffe	5	1.5	4.2
Seacroft	5	1.2	7.1
Garforth/Kippax	4	2.0	8.1
Morley	4	2.0	11.6
Rothwell	4	1.9	6.6
Total & Average	149	2.9	11.1

2.20 The areas with the most homes (over 4,000 in Seacroft, Beeston & Holbeck/City & Hunslet and Burmantofts) did not receive the most complaints. The rate at which complaints were received varied from Wetherby which received 5.7 complaints in Quarter 2 for every 1,000 units, whereas Seacroft received 1.2 complaints for every 1,000 units. When considering the last 12 months, 19.3 complaints were received for every 1,000 units in Moortown compared to 4.2 complaints for every 1,000 units in Halton Moor & Osmondthorpe/Swarcliffe.

2.21 A number of factors may influence the above, including demographic information and the types of properties. Residents in some communities may be more familiar with the complaints process or have local teams more confident in being able to signpost to the complaints process if something has gone wrong. In order to understand and respond to differences in the volume of complaints by office Housing Management will be undertaking analysis of the 2 Housing Offices with the highest number

of complaints and the 2 Offices with the lowest number of complaints to better understand the reasons why complaints volumes differ and what action is needed in response.

- 2.22 In relation to repairs related service improvements, following work over recent years to remove repair backlogs, and improve repair completion times, we have seen an increase in transactional satisfaction with completed repairs throughout 2024. We await to see the impact this may have on overall complaint levels. However, we anticipate that complaints relating to delays will fall and we will continue to monitor trends.
- 2.23 Complaints about resident's expectations not being met is the highest reason for complaints about repairs and maintenance. A number of actions are ongoing to address this including:
- Developing digitised reports for residents following repair inspections that will provide clarity on outcomes and next steps
 - Commissioning resident engagement activity around key policy areas to seek tenants input into the design and delivery of services
 - A review of webpages and information available to residents about the repairs offer
- 2.24 Staff Conduct continues to be a relatively high area for complaints about repairs and maintenance. In-order to address this, we are currently developing a resident lead review of our Contractor Code of Conduct, and we are awaiting analysis in January of a resident consultation about this to inform the new Code and standards. We are also currently analysing resident consultation results on access procedures for repairs activity. Successful access and good resident communication remains a significant contributing factor to a positive customer experience and we are eagerly awaiting resident thoughts (some 377 residents took part in these consultations) and ideas so that we can work with our repair providers to review and redesign parts of the service where improvement opportunities can be identified.
- 2.25 In previous updates we have highlighted pending improvements to how we deal with repairs and maintenance related complaints. In June this year, we increased our Intervention Team resource aligned to complaint handling to improve our capacity. In November, we completed phase two of our plans and transferred complaint handling staff from Leeds Building Services into the Intervention Team. These changes move us towards forming one single team for all Asset Management related complaints so we can focus on more consistent outcomes for residents in-line with the Housing Ombudsman Code and aftercare aligned to closing a greater volume of complaints successfully at Stage 1. In the new year, we will review the effectiveness of the changes that we have made through some targeted surveys and analysis and will use this intelligence to scope out how we can deliver a final phase and manage all property related complaints through the team.

2.26 BITMO complaints are included in the overall performance figures at the head of this section. Across Q1 to Q3 all BITMO complaints received a response within Complaint Handling Code timescales.

2.27 Ombudsman cases, for 2024/25 we've received:

	HOS assessment	HOS Formal*	LGO assessment	LGO formal
Q4	13	16	5	2
<i>Q4 last year</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>
Q1	20	22	3	6
<i>Q1 last year</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>
Q2	18	21	1	1
<i>Q2 last year</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>
Q3	17	22	4	3
<i>Q3 last year</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>

*Formal cases are those which the Housing Ombudsman will investigate, whereas assessment requests are where the Housing Ombudsman asks us for information, and these may or may not progress to formal cases. The HOS are more likely to progress straight to formal investigation than the LGO.

2.28 During the first three quarters of 2024/25, 40 determinations were received from the Housing Ombudsman:

- Fault was identified in 32 cases
- No fault was identified in 5 cases
- 3 cases were closed after initial enquiries (either outside jurisdiction or no further action required)

Where fault was identified, this can be in the form of maladministration, service failure, a combination of both, and where a case is upheld but was satisfactorily remedied by the Council.

Of the cases where fault was identified, and satisfactory remedy was not provided by the Council as part of the complaints process (29 cases):

- 15 cases identified maladministration
- 5 cases identified service failure
- 9 cases identified maladministration and service failure

In the same period, 4 determinations were received from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

- 3 cases were closed following initial enquiries (no further action or outside jurisdiction)
- 1 case identified maladministration and injustice.

2.29 Since April there have been 5 policy related learning outcomes (e.g. updating our fencing policy to ensure takes into account customer

disabilities or vulnerabilities when making decisions related to fencing requests), 2 service improvement related actions (e.g. to consider sharing copies of ASB action plans with victims to outline the steps we are taking) and 4 training related actions (e.g. identifying a training need in relation to a specific type of customer circumstances and the application of a 'direct let'). These and other actions are now being tracked to ensure completion.

3. Update on Tenant Scrutiny Board (TSB) recommendations

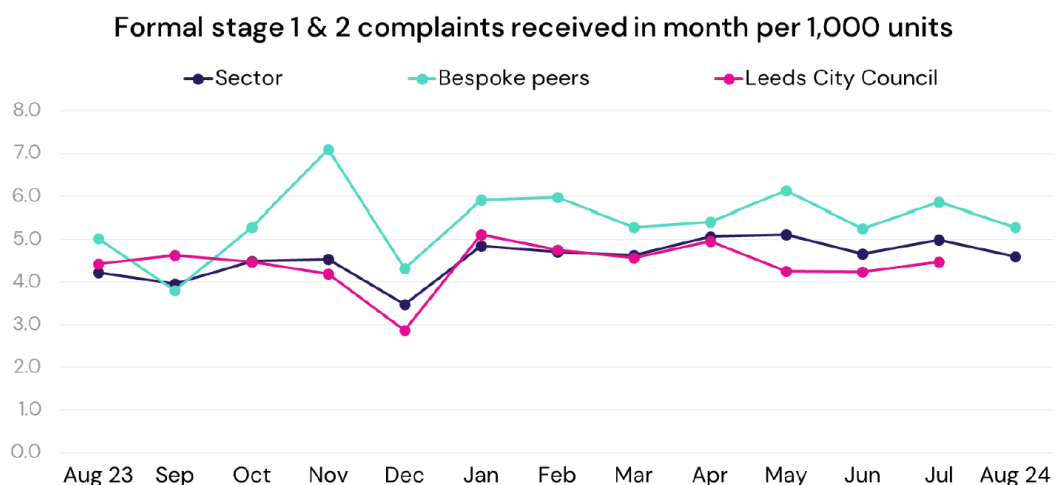
- 3.1. The Tenant Scrutiny Board signed off their review into complaints at their meeting on the 12 December 24. The scope of their review being to help Housing Leeds respond to 100% of complaints within timescale, improve how we learn from complaints and how we share this learning back with residents.
- 3.2. The TSB have made 13 recommendations for improvement, which Housing Leeds have accepted. A copy of the report, including the Housing Leeds response to the recommendations is attached as an appendix. Examples of the recommendations include:
 - a) *To enhance the current complaints web page to allow residents to upload an attachment to their complaint when submitted online.*
 - b) *The service would like Housing Leeds to issue automated reminders to Investigating Officers to let them know the complaint they were managing was due shortly. i.e. 'the response to complaint x is due in x days'*
 - c) *That Housing Leeds promote the option to extend deadline for responses (in line with the Complaint Handling Code) where this is appropriate. This should help Housing Leeds achieve improved complaint responses in timescale and give more clarity to the customer.*
- 3.3. The recommendations were based on gathering evidence and insight from a range of presentations, materials, reports and guest speakers, along with speaking with staff who are involved in complaints management. The board will receive updates from the service throughout 2025 on the delivery of these recommendations and the impact this is having. The report is currently being shared with residents.

4. Wider complaints management activity

- 4.1. To strengthen our approach to complaints management:
 - a) Continue to deliver 'Investigating Officer' training/refresher sessions for investigating officers. This reminds investigating officers about good practice and requirements of the Complaint Handling Code, especially the importance of contacting the customer to fully understand their complaint so we can effectively respond.

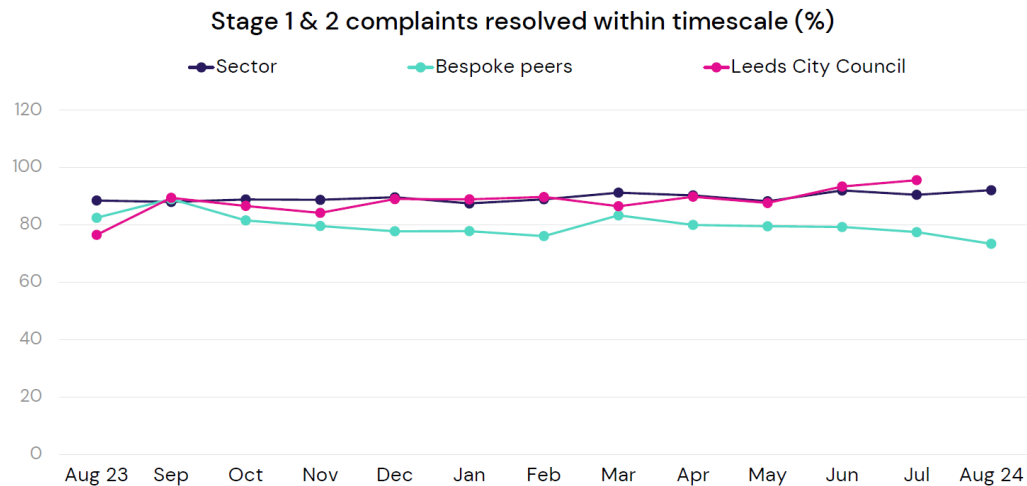
- b) Detailed quality assurance work is underway, focussed on cases which escalated from stage 1 to stage 2. Analysis is being undertaken on cases from all Housing services, with a focus on opportunities to prevent escalation alongside consideration of likely outcome should a customer refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman (informed by past decisions received from them). This sits alongside consideration of compliance with the complaint handling code, which had shaped earlier quality assurance work. Full results, feedback and recommendations are expected in mid-Q1. The escalation rate of cases from Stage 1 to 2, for Q2 was 25%.
- c) We have taken part in research led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) linked to the national [Make Things Right campaign](#). This campaign seeks to raise awareness for tenants on how to raise issues and make complaints if they have problems with their home or landlord. MCHLG are speaking to landlords to hear their experiences of complaints management and to explore how they can support landlords to communicate and share this campaign with residents. Discussions with the agency doing this research has involved two sessions whereby we've been able to advise what works well, and what material would help us reach our communities such as Easy Read versions of leaflets and translated material. We have also fed back the need to use a variety of images that do not portray a negative stereotype of social housing, or the same type of images that are used by disrepair claims companies.
- d) At the end of October 2024, Housemark presented Housing Leeds with it's annual overview of results, that included a range of information about the performance and cost of our service benchmarked against others. This demonstrated that when assessing the number of complaints we receive per month as a proportion of units we manage, the proportion is below that of our peer group and the sector as a whole.

Complaints volumes – year to date



- e) Our performance in terms of responding to complaints within timescales is also positive. Our August 24 performance (that we have maintained) is above that of our peer group and the sector.

Complaints responded to in target time



- f) The service continues to receive compliments on its complaint handling for example, two recent compliments for the same officer received in the Repairs Intervention Team, stated "I would just like to praise how Chelsea has handled my complaint and has **gone above and beyond for me**. We are all quick to complain! So, I would like you to know how much it means to have someone deal with your complaint in a **polite friendly efficient manner**" and "Thank you very much for taking the time to look into my complaint and **keeping me updated** on your progress - I'm very grateful for your detailed response. I also want to thank you for speaking to me about my concerns in such an **open, honest and professional manner**, it really does make such a **positive difference**".

5. Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

- 5.1. The Code requires that a 'Member Responsible for Complaints' (or MRC) is appointed. The member is responsible for supporting a positive complaint handling culture and ensuring that insight on complaint handling and performance is shared with the 'governing body'.
- 5.2. Statement from the Member Responsible for Complaints:

The additional information in the report explaining the common types of complaints is useful and I would encourage the service to seek to include examples in future reports of how our service is responding to these in more detail. I'm pleased that our performance compared to other landlords is relatively strong, though as parts of this report indicate, there is room for improvement in terms of specific types of repairs we undertake and in seeking to reduce the escalation rates so more residents are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint at Stage 1.

I would like there to be more opportunity for Board Members to discuss complaints analysis in more detail and influence the service's response to complaints. I am therefore proposing as part of the review of the Leeds Housing Board that a Complaints Sub Group is established, but with full reports and key points from the sub group continuing to be presented to Board.

I welcome the Tenant Scrutiny Board's recommendations, and I'd like to thank them for their work and input to help us improve. I would like the Leeds Housing Board proposed sub-group on complaints to receive updates throughout 2025 on the services progress on implementing the recommendations and look forward to hearing about the positive impact of these.

Councillor Jess Lennox – Member Responsible for Complaints, Chair of the Leeds Housing Board and Executive Member for Housing.

6. Discussion points

- 6.1. What might some of the local factors be that drive higher volumes of complaints in different management areas?
- 6.2. Is there other information related to complaints the board would wish to see in future complaints reporting?
- 6.3. We will shortly be seeking input from the MRC and ideally tenant board members to help us undertake our Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment – this is an opportunity to raise awareness of this activity in the new year.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Board are asked to note and comment on any information included in this report
- 7.2 The Board consider the statement on this latest period by the MRC.
- 7.3 That the Board accept the 13 Tenant Scrutiny Board recommendations, seek updates to ensure their successful delivery and thank the Tenant Scrutiny Board for the outcomes of their review.