

# White Horse Housing Association Ltd

## 2023-2024 Annual Complaints Report

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Association takes complaints from its residents seriously. We do all we can to investigate and act where required. To maintain the link between residents and Board members this report gives an outline of each complaint to inform the Board where our residents feel our service has failed. The report also shows how the complaint was resolved, the time it took and what we learned from it.

### 2. Type of Complaints

- 2.1 Seven formal complaints were received during the year. Six were completed at stage one and one at stage two. Two required an extension agreed with the complainant to fully investigate and reply. One of the complaints was related to dissatisfaction with a repair, two were related to the behaviour of the operative carrying out a repair, one was relating to damage to flooring whilst a repair was being carried out, two were related to WHH allegedly not addressing issues when asked and one was relating to a shared owner's dissatisfaction with wiring in her new build home. A full log of the complaints received is attached at **Appendix 1**

### 3. Source of Complaints

- 3.1 There were two complaints from Codford and two from Rushall (all unrelated) with the remaining three being from the villages of Great Somerford, Heddington and Urchfont.

### 4. Timescale to Resolve the Complaints

- 4.1 Three complaints were completed within ten working days, one complaint took eleven days due to the complainant not responding to a letter or email regarding a meeting. One complaint regarding the contractors operative took thirty two days because the operative had gone off on long term sick. The complainant understood that we needed to be able to extend the period in order for the complaint to be investigated when the operative returned to work. One complaint took fifty three days and an extension was agreed so that the complainant could obtain supporting technical reports. The final complaint took two hundred and sixty days to resolve. For most of this time the complaint remained at stage one and the resident worked with the Operations Director to try to resolve it. In total there were forty four actions and documents generated during this period. A closing letter was sent on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024 but this was appealed by the complainant on 6<sup>th</sup> March and went to Stage Two of the complaints process. The closing letter from the CEO regarding the appeal (which was not upheld) was sent to the complainant on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The complainant accepted the outcome of Stage Two.

### 5. How Complaints were Resolved

- 5.1 The complaint involving damage to property when an air source heat pump was decommissioned and drained down was resolved by a payment of compensation to cover the cost of new flooring. An explanation and apology was also given to the resident who had sustained the damage.

- 5.2 The resident who had complained about the state of a repair and had received mixed messages from the contractor regarding choices of materials received a joint visit from the Operations Director and the Maintenance Manager. The bathroom was inspected and both agreed that the resident had received a poor service with the work that had been completed so far. As a result, an acceptable resolution agreed and the resident was given an agreed sum to purchase their preferred tiles for the bathroom and permission was given for them to finish the job themselves which is what they preferred to do.
- 5.3 The complaint regarding the claim that the electrical wiring in a new build house was faulty was taken to the Association's Employers Agent who had good knowledge of the specification and had assessed whether the wiring could possibly be defective. The wiring had been signed off by the Building Inspector at the time the property was handed over and all certification was in place. The resident was advised of this and asked to provide a technical report to support their complaint. The report was never produced and eventually that part of the complaint was closed. It was agreed that if a report was produced then a new complaint would be opened and a full investigation carried out at that time.

The second part of this complaint was relating to the drainage at the property and the fact that the property was located at the end of a drainage run and that if blockages occurred it was they that were affected more than others. A blockage had occurred and the resident had to pay for it to be remedied. The resident felt this was unfair because the blockage, identified as wet wipes, could not possibly have been caused from her property. The resident was unable to provide a report to the association of the nature of the blockage. However, WHH decided to partially uphold the drainage complaint and tried to assist the resident going forward by writing to all residents in the row reminding them not to flush anything down the toilets except toilet paper.

- 5.4 There were two complaints regarding the behaviour of operatives when working in resident's homes. This is always disappointing because in general residents have a good experience when they allow our contractors into their homes. There is a code of conduct in place and we continuously remind our main contractor how important it is. On these two occasions the operatives were found to be in breach of the code and as such the Maintenance Manager referred the complaint to the Director at 3 Solutions who investigated. As a result, the residents received apologies and the two operatives were dealt with by the Contractor.
- 5.5 The complaint that the Association does not address neighbour nuisance was not upheld. Sometimes it is very difficult dealing with neighbour nuisance, particularly when there is claim and counter claim. The Association has to be seen to be fair at all times. We investigate all complaints but do not act under the tenancy agreement unless the complaints can be substantiated. It would not be fair to hold someone to account for an alleged behaviour if there was no clear evidence. This can be hard for those who feel they are being victimised to understand and everyone has a different level of tolerance to things like noise, parking, children playing etc. On this occasion the complaint was not upheld but a comprehensive letter was sent to the complainant showing how we had investigated and assessed the nuisance behaviour claim and what the outcome was.
- 5.6 A complaint was received claiming the Association had been negligent in dealing with the resident's heating problems. This took almost a year to be resolved, not because we had ignored the issue, but because we could not get copies of the relevant technical documents for the heating system from the developer or the original installer. In order to resolve the complaint, the Operations Director spent time

throughout the year focusing on obtaining the necessary information, undertaking forty four different actions to get enough information in order to be able to fully reply to the complainant. Finally, an inspection appointment was made, but only after the Operations Director had threatened to trigger the company's own complaints procedure. Throughout this time the residents were kept informed and also tried to assist themselves, but to no avail. The complaint was not upheld but a solution was put forward as a goodwill gesture that was acceptable to the residents.

## **6. What we learned from the complaints**

6.1 It was extremely useful analysing each of these complaints and understanding exactly what had gone wrong. As a result, measures have been put in place to try to ensure we do better in future. Some of the improvements implemented include:

**a. Damage to property**

The damage to the flooring was caused by draining down a decommissioned heating system – this will be monitored more closely when undertaken in the future to prevent a repeat of this occurrence.

**b. Dissatisfaction with repair**

To ensure we remind contractors to give resident's choices when installing splash boards or tiling to bathrooms and to listen to their preferences.

**c. Claims of poor standards in new build homes.**

In future a deadline will be given to the developer for producing supporting technical reports so that complaints do not stay open ended for long periods of time.

**d. Attitude of Operatives.**

We will ensure that contractors are aware of specific access arrangements for residents where they are in place. We will also remind our Contractors to highlight the 'code of conduct' we have in place for operatives in their team meetings.

**e. Negligent in resolving heating issues.**

A learning outcome from this long drawn out complaint is to ensure that the complaints procedure of the company being dealt with is triggered at a much earlier stage.

## **7 Report to the Board**

7.1 A copy of this report was submitted to the Association's Board on the 20 May 2024. Members unanimously agreed to note the contents of the report and the outcomes achieved.

## **8 Report to the Resident's' Scrutiny Panel**

8.1 A copy of this report was submitted to the Resident's Scrutiny Panel on the 7 May 2024. Members agreed to note the report and take the following action:

- a. Ask officers for an update on the outcome of these complaints and the success of the learning points implemented within six months;
- b. Explore the possibility of scrutiny panel members helping to 'mediate' on neighbourhood issues, where practical.

Scheme	Refers To	Reason	Notified Date	Internal Owner	Resolution Date Target	Extension Date Agreed with Complainant	Resolved Date and Time	Closed Stage	Days To Resolve	Upheld	How Resolved	Learning Outcomes
Church Acre, Codford	Contractor	Damage to property whilst work is carried out.	29/03/2024	Mr Darrel Smith	15/04/2024	N/A	04/04/2024	1	4	Yes	Apology and offer of compensation.	Closer scrutiny required of the contractor.
Old Barnyard, Rushall	Contractor	Disatisfaction with repair.	02/02/2024	Mr Darrel Smith	15/02/2024	N/A	07/02/2024	1	4	Yes	Home visit to inspect and discuss.	To ensure a choice on splash board options when fitting.
Somerbrook, Great Somerford	Property	Disatisfaction with wiring in new build home and neighbours blocking drains.	24/01/2024	Mrs Belinda Eastland	06/02/2024	Yes - awaiting report from tenant's electrician - several contact reminders to no avail	09/04/2024	1	53	Partly	Letter to neighbours re how to avoid blockages.	Close complaints much earlier if tenant does not provide supporting evidence.
The Gardens, Rushall	Contractor	Attitude of operative in the home.	25/10/2023	Mr Darrel Smith	08/11/2023	N/A	07/11/2023	1	10	Yes	Spoke to the Contractor who apologised to tenant and revised access arrangements.	Ensure note is on account for Contractors to see re access.
Awdry Close, Heddington	Contractor	Attitude of operative in the home.	15/05/2023	Mr Darrel Smith	30/06/2023	Yes - Operative off on long term sick	27/06/2023	1	32	Yes	Spoke to Contractor who apologised to tenant and raised it with the employees.	Ensure 3Solutions reminds operatives in team meetings of code of conduct.
Cherry Orchard, Codford	Department	Says WHH does not address neighbour nuisance issues.	18/04/2023	Mrs Belinda Eastland	03/05/2023	N/A	03/05/2023	1	11	Partly	Investigations, review and comprehensive response giving details of contact with neighbour and our findings.	It may better to encourage a formal complaint to draw a line under a matter where unsubstantiated reports continue.
Manor Farmyard, Urchfont	Department	WHH has been negligent in resolving heating issues.	03/04/2023	Mrs Belinda Eastland	17/04/2023	Yes - awaiting various reports and inspections. Worked together with resident throughout.	09/04/2024	2	260	Partly	Offer to contribute towards a replacement heating solution. Offer accepted.	Where 3rd party is involved activate their own complaints process sooner.