

## **LiveWest's Board response to the self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and Annual Submission 2024**

In February 2024 I was appointed as the Board Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), in line with the expectations of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

As MRC, I have reviewed the LiveWest annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) for 2024 and confirm as follows.

1. The complaints elements of our Customer Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy (the Policy) comply fully with the HOS Complaints Handling Code as evidenced in our self-assessment.
2. The Policy was updated and scrutinised by the Customer Services Committee (CSC) in May 2024, and approved by the Board later in the same month. Participating at the CSC were the Chair and Vice Chair of InFocus, our customer scrutiny panel and part of our resident engagement framework. InFocus reviews and contributes to new and revised service policies.
3. The CSC also received and scrutinised our Annual Report on Complaints including our self-assessment against the complaints handling code. Pending updates to our complaints policy the CSC Committee confirmed full compliance with the code in its recommendations to the Board.
4. At its meeting in May the Board approved the changes to the complaints policy, including the amendment of the stage 2 response timescale to 20 working days to align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
5. The self-assessment of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's code was reported and it was noted that compliance would be tested as part of the Internal audit of complaints programmed for later in the year.
6. The quarterly report from the CSC to the Board includes a section for the MRC to advise on and discuss with the Board our performance on complaints service accessibility, responses within Policy and learnings into action.
7. At the May CSC and Board, in addition to the policy update and review of code compliance, I presented my findings in relation to a recent internal report to the HOS in accordance with paragraph 54 (f) of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. I advised the Committee and Board that while it was disappointing that the HOS order had been necessary, the internal report had been insightful and valuable and actions arising were all planned and many completed. I had spoken to the managers concerned and was able to give the Board substantial assurance on the process and the learnings.
8. As MRC I will continue to engage with the teams to gain assurance that the Policy is being applied as we intended. That process of assurance flows through CSC and on to Board.

I have discussed all of the above with the Chair of the Board, Jacqueline Starr. She is satisfied that it is a suitable response on behalf of the Board. I will also present it for assurance at CSC and the next Board in August, with any significant further comment to be forwarded to the HOS as an addendum.

On this basis I can confirm that our submission is fully in line with the Board's informed understanding.

**John Newbury**

**Senior Independent Director and Vice Chair, Board Member Responsible for Complaints**

**25<sup>th</sup> June 2024**