



Meeting

Group Board

Date

Monday 24th June 2024

Item No. & Report Title

Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report Self-Assessment

Author

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1. Purpose of Report

- The purpose of the Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report is to provide complaints data and identify complaint trends for the financial year 2023 – 2024 for scrutiny and challenge by the Group Board as the governing body.
- The report will identify areas of improvements made to our service to help our residents when making a complaint or in preventing a complaint.
- The annual complaint performance and service improvement report is a requirement for the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Annual Submissions Form in June 2024.
- The Self-Assessment for review by Board prior to submission is as Appendix 1
- The reviewed Complaints Policy for review and approval is as Appendix 2

2. Recommendation/s

- Board read and provide scrutiny and challenge to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and approve.
- The Board (as the governing body) to provide a formal response to the report that will be published on our website with a link to our self-assessment annual submission.
- To review and approve the Complaint Handling Code Annual Self-Assessment for submission Appendix 1
- To review and approve the Complaints Policy Appendix 2

3. Link to Strategic Aims, Objectives and Values

This will link to content for the Report and Financial Statements- Year Ending March 2024 document.

Our People – that people are at the core of our business and services..

Our Homes – quality homes where residents feel safe and proud to live.

4. Financial Impact

No Financial Impact, however there are potential financial risks if complaints are subject to an Ombudsman Order that references financial remedies.

5. Value for Money Impact

Value for Money will be achieved through providing services that meet and exceed the expectations of our customers. Customers report they receive VFM during surveys and feedback.

6. Risk and Assurance Impact

The Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report is a new requirement from the Housing Ombudsman Service and will mitigate risk and provide assurance.

The Self-Assessment will provide evidence of compliance and reduce risks of non-compliance.

The Complaints Policy will ensure a robust complaint handling process for the organisation.

7. Compliance with Relevant Legislation and Regulation

The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State under Section 51, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Localism Act 2011, Building Safety Act 2022 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. The Act requires social landlords to be members of an approved scheme.

The Scheme came into effect on 1st April 2024.

8. Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Impact

The organisation's Complaint's policy and procedure is compliant with Equality and Diversity requirements detailed in the Complaints Handling Code.

9. Customer Voice and Impact

The customer Complaints Panel met in April 2024 to review the revised Complaints Handling Code and the Annual Situation report and provided insight, feedback and recommendations that the Customer Experience Team will be implementing.

10. Report

Introduction

An effective complaints handling process offers crucial feedback and highlights potential areas for improvement across the organisation. Trident Group highly values feedback and comments from residents and customers, as they play a vital role in our providing insight and influence, particularly where there are lessons learnt, 'You Said, We Will' actions and improvements in practices and the delivery of landlord services.

The Complaint Policy was reviewed and updated in May 2024 to ensure compliance with the new Housing Ombudsman Code and approved at the June Executive Team meeting.

The Complaint Handling Process - [Complaints process \(tridentgroup.org.uk\)](https://tridentgroup.org.uk)

The Customer Experience Team co-ordinate and manage all complaints. Complaints are recorded and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt; a customer will receive an acknowledgment letter which will including the following:

- Complaint reference
- Details of the Responding Officer who will be investigating the complaint
- Timescales for the complaint response
- Requests should any reasonable adjustments be required

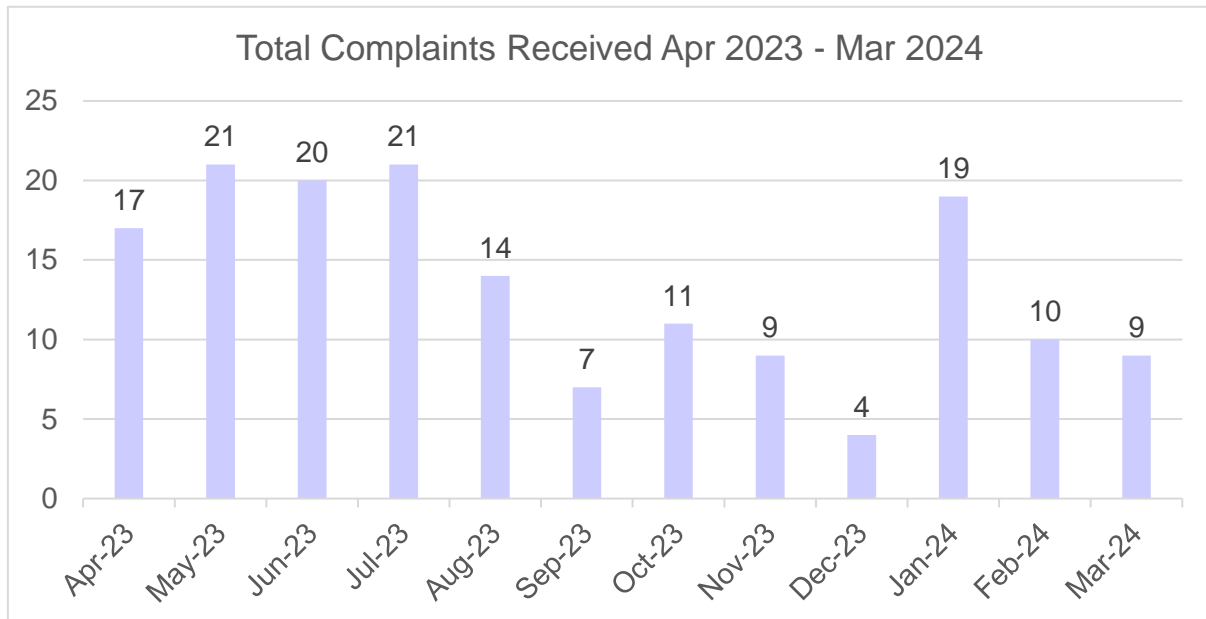
A formal complaint is resolved within 10 working days of the acknowledgement being sent in line with the group policy, however extension can be granted on occasion, for example if actions or information is required from external parties who would be unable to meet the initial response deadline.

If the complainant is unhappy with our Stage 1 response, they have the right to escalate the complaint to a Stage 2 complaint. This is allocated to an appropriate officer to review within 5 working days and a final response will be provided to the complainant within 20 working days.

All letter templates are based on examples and guidance provided by the Housing Ombudsman Service and have previously been reviewed at compliance and internal audits. DTP conducted a complaints Review in October 2023 which provided assurance that we met the requirements of the HOS Complaint Handling code.

Performance- Data Analysis of Complaints April 2023 – March 2024

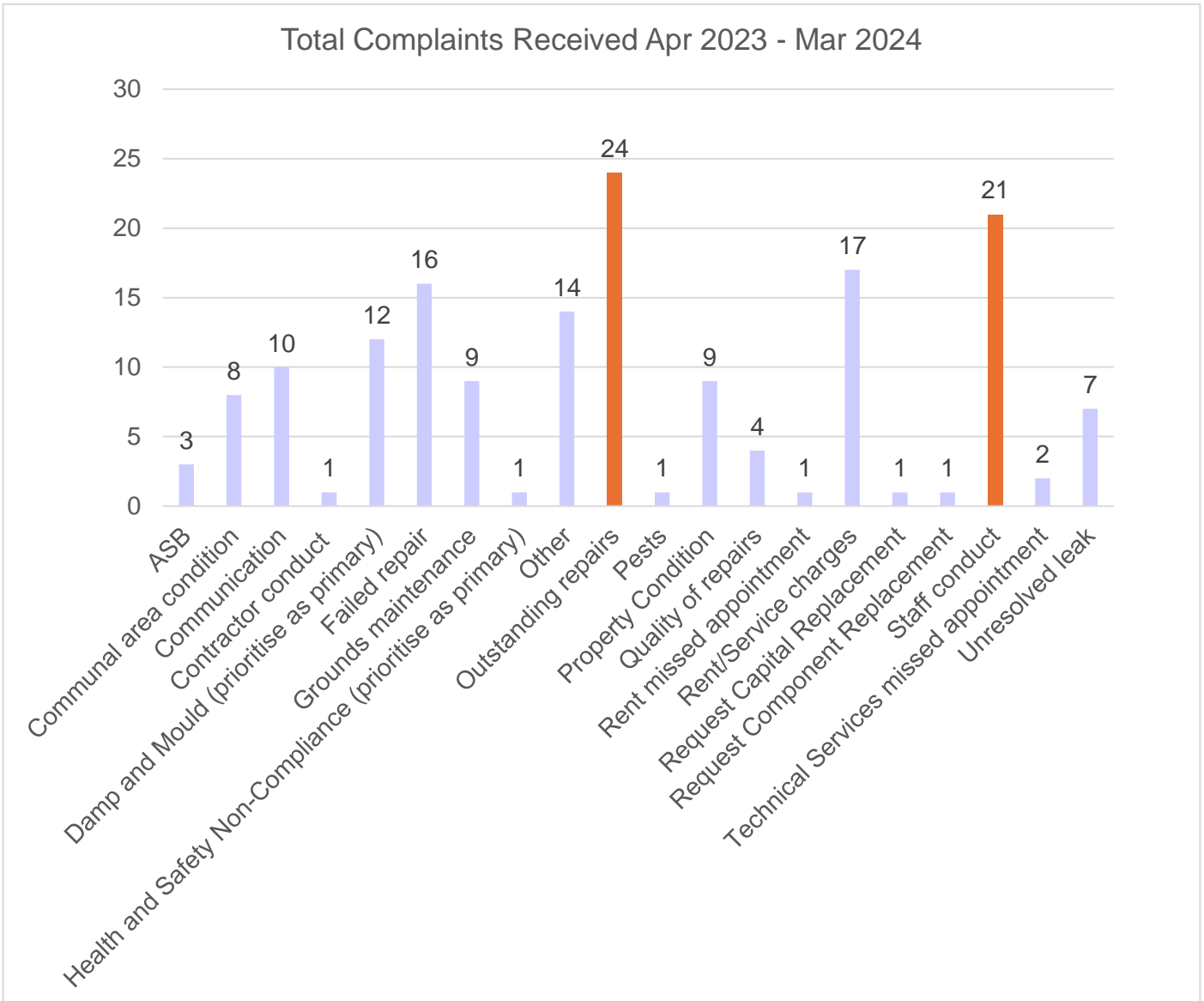
Trident Group received 162 formal complaints in the financial year 23/24. Below shows a breakdown on a month-on-month basis.



The highest monthly number of complaints (21) were received in May and July 2023. December recorded the lowest number of complaints, with only 4 cases reported.

The organisation has not refused to accept any complaints.

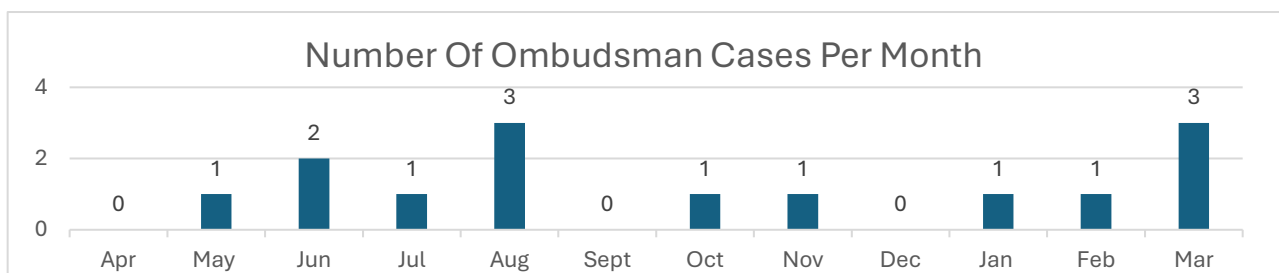
Repairs	Total Complaints	Staff Conduct	Total Complaints
Not Upheld	6	Not Upheld	10
Partially Upheld	1	Partially Upheld	3
Upheld	17	Upheld	8
Grand Total	24	Grand Total	21



The most prevalent type of complaint was about outstanding repairs, with 24 cases reported. 75% of these cases were upheld.

The 2nd highest reason for complaint was staff conduct with 52% being upheld.

Ombudsman Inflow 23 – 24



Month	Reason for contact	Action/ Request	Met within timescale	Outcome	Determination
May 23	Handling of the resident's reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB)	Action	Yes	<p>A letter of apology from the Chief Executive</p> <p>£1350 Compensation to paid into the residents rent account</p> <p>A risk assessment and vulnerability assessment completed by Trident</p> <p>Reviewing the anti-social behavior with the Community Safety and Safeguarding Officer</p> <p>Trident reviewed the Complaints Handling Policy and delivered training to our complaint Responding Officers.</p> <p>The Housing Service Manager to carry out an assessment of the resident rehousing application</p>	Severe Maladministration
June 23	<p>The landlords handling of reports of ongoing anti-social behaviour from the property above (including noise from the wooden flooring)</p> <p>The landlord's poor communication when updating the resident</p>	Request (Stage 1) – The Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 30 th June	Yes	N/A- Not Upheld	NA
June 23	The landlord's handing of reports of issues with boiler, resulting in no heating or hot water for 12 days.	Request (Stage 1) – the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by 21 st July	Yes	<p>£50 Goodwill gesture</p> <p>Revaluation of the complaints administration process</p>	NA
July 23	<p>Various cracks throughout the property</p> <p>Plaster falling off the walls</p> <p>Gaps between the window frames and the walls.</p>	Request (Stage 2) - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 20 th July	Yes	The resident agreed to move to a suitable property while repairs started on the subsidence issue	NA
Aug 23	<p>The landlords handling of requests to explain an increase to service charges</p> <p>The resident states they got a letter regarding a service charge increase of 7% in March 2023 but the actual</p>	Request Stage 1 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 10 th August	Yes	<p>£250 Goodwill Gesture</p> <p>A investigation of the service chargers</p>	NA

Month	Reason for contact	Action/ Request	Met within timescale	Outcome	Determination
	charge has gone up by 27% and the resident would like an explanation for this. The landlords handling of the complaint (no call back, no answer to request for service explanation.				
Aug 23	The landlord's handing of reports of issues with boiler, resulting in no heating or hot water for 12 days.	Request Stage 2 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 16 th August	Yes	£150 Goodwill gesture payment Revaluation of the complaints administration process	NA
Aug 23	Handling of repairs to her home Decision not to reimburse her for costs incurred in repairing her home	Action	Yes	£400 Compensation to paid directly to the residents bank account Improved the Complaint Handling Template letters and provided Complaint Handling Training Updating the process for the out of hours team to report non-emergency repairs to our CS team to ensure they are raised appropriately on our systems.	Maladministration
Oct 23	The landlord's handling of reported delays in purchasing the property under the Right to Buy process, which took from September 2020 to June 2023.	Request Stage 1 the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 25 th October	Yes	Na – Not Upheld	NA
Nov 23	The landlord's handling of reports of outstanding repairs raised by the resident caused by damp and mould The landlord's handling of reports of delays in responding to the resident and fixing the repairs	Request Stage 2- the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 8 th December	No - letter sent 13 th December	£500 Gesture good-will due to the delay in completing the repairs Repairs to completed in full	NA
Jan 24	Anti-social behaviour, including noise nuisance and their neighbour running a business from their home.	Request Stage 2 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 5 th March and Complaint Handling Failure Order	No – Letter sent 16 th April, mitigating circumstance relating to vulnerability accepted by	NA – Not upheld. HoS reviewed case and revoked all complaint handling failings	NA

Month	Reason for contact	Action/ Request	Met within timescale	Outcome	Determination
	They have been without an intercom for a period of six months.		the Ombudsman.		
Feb 24	<p>The landlords handling of requests to explain an increase to service charges</p> <p>The resident states they got a letter regarding a service charge increase of 7% in March 2023 but the actual charge has gone up by 27% and the resident would like an explanation for this.</p> <p>The landlords handling of the complaint (no call back, no answer to request for service explanation.</p>	Request Stage 1 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 13 th February 24	No	<p>£300 Goodwill Gesture</p> <p>A breakdown of service charges were sent to the resident and a credit applied to the rent account due to the error in the amount of service charges charged.</p>	NA
Mar 24	<p>The application to have a puppy in the flat under health grounds</p> <p>The request to have the overgrown garden cut.</p> <p>Complaint handling – not responding to emails</p>	Request Stage 1 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 5 th April	Yes	NA not upheld – pet application not completed	NA
Mar 24	<p>The resident does not believe the compensation was adequate.</p> <p>The landlord has not made any improvements to its out of hours provision.</p>	Action	Yes	The case is currently being investigated by the Ombudsman	The case is currently being investigated by the Ombudsman
Mar 24	<p>The landlords handling of the reports of the right to acquire.</p> <p>Complaints handling</p>	Request Stage 1 - the Ombudsman required Trident to provide a written response by the 9 th April	Yes	<p>Home Ownership Officer to contact resident in relation to right to acquire.</p> <p>Provided training to housing officers in line with our complaints policy.</p>	NA

Severe Maladministration Findings from The Housing Ombudsman

Summary of complaint – Regrettably in May 2023, Trident Group has received its first Severe Maladministration findings from the Housing Ombudsman. This determination was made in relation to the handling of a resident's reports of Anti-Social Behaviour and the handling of the associated complaint.

The lack of risk and vulnerable assessment and action plan from Trident left the resident feeling unsupported. Due to the lack of action the Housing Ombudsman issued Trident with a Complaint Handling Failure Order to ensure the right steps were taken to alleviate any concerns from the resident.

Lessons Learnt – Trident have taken steps to ensure this never happens to any resident again. We have:

- Created a new Community Safety Team.
- Improved Complaints and ASB handling including dedicated modules on our housing system.
- A more robust approach to ASB case management and risk assessment.
- Implementing a weekly complaints meeting.
- Invested in training.

Our Service Improvements

At Trident Group, we strive to learn from complaints, comments, and feedback. This year, we have implemented the following changes to enhance the overall customer experience.

- Trident has invested in a **dedicated Customer Experience Team** to oversee the complaints handling process and to ensure high standards of complaint handling.
- The Customer Experience Team review any outcome letters to ensure the correct investigation and resolution has been given to the resident and that complaints are answered in their entirety.
- Responding Officers are required to attend **complaints training** to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake this role and address and resolve complaints effectively.
- **Weekly complaints meetings** are held for responding officers with open complaints to update the Customer Experience team on their investigation, to access additional support and guidance and also for shared case reviews for closed complaints that identify lessons learned and service improvements. This has seen improvements in response times KPI figures.

Repairs and Maintenance

- The Property Services Team have made a number of changes in practice which includes establishing stringent **quality control for repairs and maintenance**, developing a **comprehensive quality assurance system**, including detailed standards and protocols for all repair work. Regular training will be provided to ensure

staff are well-versed in these standard and encourage a culture of excellence and accountability in service delivery.

- We quickly identify where complaints refer to issues relating to damp and mould, these are triaged and prioritised and are responded to in accordance with **Damp and Mould** policies and procedures.
- Property Services and Homes and Communities have moved into one shared office space to ensure we can get **quicker resolutions for residents by working collaboratively**.

Improvements to Communication and Customer Experience

- We have opened our new and improved **customer portal** which allows residents to book repairs, look at statements of their rent account, pay their rent and make comments, complaints and compliments.
- Trident conducts **focus groups**, including our **complaints panel**, where we meet with residents to share updates about the organization, analyse customer feedback, for example survey results and reviews KPI data, trends trends and seek feedback to enhance our services.
- Trident conducts regular **estate walkabouts**, inviting residents and internal and external stakeholders to participate. These activities and the open dialogue and feedback generated contribute to action plans and wider process changes and improvements.
- In response to the increasing number of complaints about the waiting time for calls to be answered we have **made changes to our call waiting messages** advising of number in the que and providing additional ways to get in touch or report repairs through the portal, we have added an advisory note to the 'News' section on the landing page of the website. We have also increased the analytics available on the system and added additional detail to reporting KPIs.

Improvements to Internal Operations

- We have designed a **new complaints module in CRM** where we can identify root cause, monitor the complaint handling of each case and capture changes to our processes to improve our service to residents.
- We have designed a **lessons learnt report for the Board** in response to the determination received in 2023 and ensure full compliance with the orders received. This was published on our website and to our workforce.
- The Homes and Communities department are working together on a **drive to increase the information that we hold about the people we house**. This starts with the information that we gather at the allocations and lettings stage and is enhanced through well-being checks and tenancy milestone visits and the development of honest and trusted relationships with all of our officers.
- We have recognized that there are gaps in our existing data that we need to address to better meet the needs of our residents including EDI information such as ethnicity, preferred language and disability information. This information enables us to ensure a person-centred approach to the services we deliver and the support we offer that meet the needs of individuals and households. Therefore we will be adopting a whole-organisation approach to **'The Big Door Knock' census survey** throughout June and July 2024.
- Complaints now included in all new **Staff Inductions**.

- **Training Module** now delivered across the organization to expand the knowledge on how to deal with complaints.
- **Monthly detailed performance reports** presented to Exec Team

What's next

- 1) In 2024 we have started to log our compliments from our residents as it is very important to understand what we are doing well as a business as well as what we need to improve on.
- 2) In line with the new Housing Ombudsman Code we are looking to strengthen our approach to reasonable adjustment for residents. Allowing them to communicate with us however they feel comfortable and ensure we are able to provide high level of service.
- 3) In line with the new self-assessment we are looking to have clear and concise Vulnerable Persons Policy to ensure we cater and capture the needs of our vulnerable residents.
- 4) In depth reviews for lessons learnt with the Complaints Panel which will allow us to make improvements on how we deal with complaints and prevent them all together.

Complaint Handling Code - Self-Assessment

The Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. For the first time, this means landlords will need to submit their self-assessment annually to the Ombudsman. The timing of the annual submission to the Ombudsman has been aligned with the Regulator of Social Housing's requirements for the publication and submission of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) outcomes.

For landlords like Trident with over 1,000 homes this will be 30th June 2024.

The self-assessment must also be published on our website so that residents are able to easily access it.

We have completed the Self-Assessment (**appendix 1**) as required and provided details to confirm our compliance with the new Housing Ombudsman Code.

Once approved by Board and submitted to the HOS we will publish on our website.

Complaint Policy

As a result of the requirement of the Complaint Handling Code we have also reviewed and updated our complaints policy (**appendix 2**) so we are in line with the housing Ombudsman when dealing with complaints. Once approved this will also be published to our website.

Member Responsible for Complaints

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code set outs that it is a statutory requirement for a scheme member landlord to appoint a member of the governing body that has lead responsibility for complaints. The role is responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body

on the landlord's complaint handling performance and to support a positive complaint handling culture. Paul Hayward, Chair of Housing and Communities Committee, is Trident Group's Member Responsible for Complaints.

Conclusion

We are working across the organisation to improve the services our customers receive from Trident Group, including the way in which we handle and manage complaints. Trident Group now have a dedicated Customer Experience team to handle and manage all complaints for the organisation and have an improvement work programme for the next 12 months directly linking to the organizational Recovery Action Plans.

The team are working on improvements to the Complaints management system in recording, reporting and analysing complaints data and using this and complaint case studies to make changes to practices and procedures and for organizational training and learning.

The Board and Homes and Communities Committee will continue to be presented with Complaint Situation reports and complaint Key Performance Information.

There are no areas of non-compliance with the revised Complaint Handling Code which is evidenced in the Self Assessment (appendix 1) which will be published on the website subject to approval by the Board, at the end of June 2024 and submitted as a link within the Complaint Handling Code Annual Submission.