

BOARD

ONGO HOMES LTD

15 May 2024

Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides our annual complaint performance information and an overview to Board on key service improvements. This report is now mandated by the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in line with the new complaint handling code. Within this report you will find performance data in relation to complaint handling, our annual Self-Assessment against the complaint handling code, reports, and publications by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to Ongo.

1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Board is asked to consider the content of this report and consider if the Self-Assessment gives assurance that we are compliant with Complaint Handling Code 2024 and approves for submission.
- 1.2 Board to also provide scrutiny and challenge on the contents of the report and a response to this report with the intent it will be published to our tenants and customers on our website and provided in our annual submission.

2.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON CROSS CUTTING THEMES

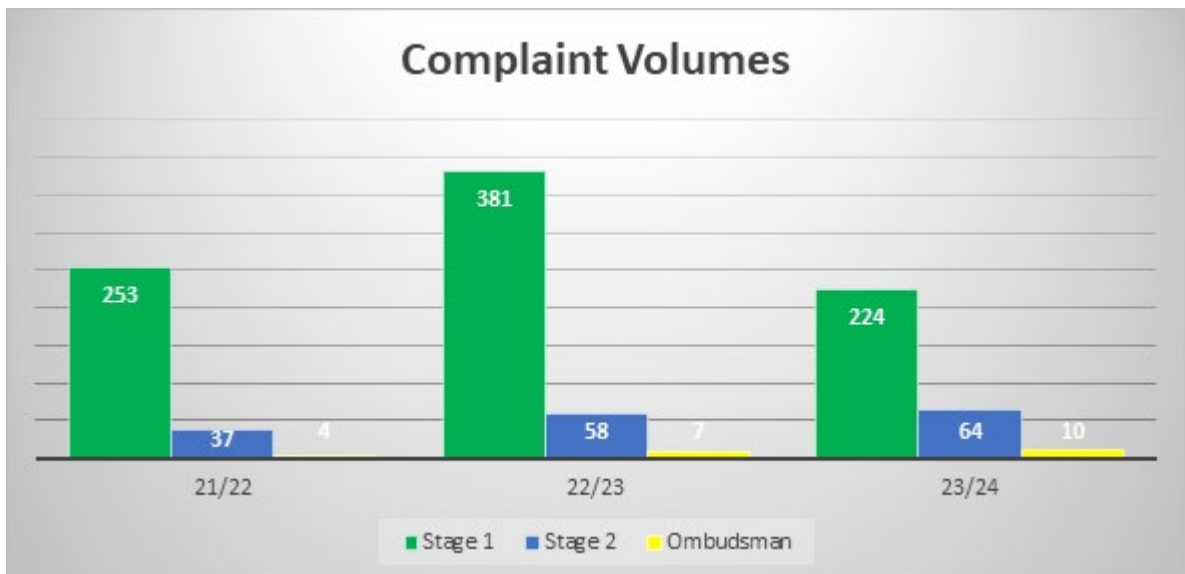
THEME	IMPACT – Positive and / or Negative	Relevant to report?
Risk and Health and Safety (H&S)	The Regulator of Social Housing expects providers to take account of risk and health and safety in the delivery of its services. Complaints are one of the opportunities to listen to our tenants and customers and highlight potential health and safety Risks.	Yes
Governance	The National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance requires Ongo to ensure Board has access to insight, views, and consideration of its customers. This includes customer feedback and learning from complaints. The Complaint Handling Code 2024 states that landlords must produce an annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement report for scrutiny and challenge.	Yes
RSH economic regulatory standards	The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) two main objectives: Economic objective: to make sure that registered providers (landlords) are well-managed and financially stable.	Yes

THEME	IMPACT – Positive and / or Negative	Relevant to report?
	Consumer objective: to make sure that tenants get quality accommodation, have choice and protection, and can hold their landlords to account.	
RSH consumer regulatory standards	The RSH said that under the new standards, which follow the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, landlords will need to: ensure tenants are safe in their homes, listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right and be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect.	Yes
Other statutory/regulatory compliance, e.g. legal, charity commission, FCA	The new complaints handling code becomes statutory from 1 April 2024. HO severe and maladministration decisions could lead to regulator interest with two Ongo cases reported to the RSH within 2023/24.	No
Financial	Enhanced HO interventions are leading to higher levels of compensation being paid. A failure to repair could lead to more disrepair claims.	Yes
Value for Money (VFM)	Ongo delivers all services in line with VFM principles.	Yes
Equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI)	<p>Ongo has several methods that considers equality and diversity in the services it provides to tenants.</p> <p>The latest spotlight report produced by the Housing Ombudsman states that we need to understand our tenants needs and ensure vulnerabilities are recognised. Our reasonable adjustments policy covers this area.</p>	Yes
Human resources	N/A	No
Customer voice/impact	<p>Excellent service delivery can best be achieved by the genuine and active influence of residents in the way the organisations operate and interacts with its customers.</p> <p>Ongo publicises its complaints data to tenants and our involved tenants group Community Voice.</p> <p>The Tenant Complaint Panel has been actively involved in the Self-assessment process for the complaint handling code ensuring our tenant voice is present across our complaint handling services</p>	Yes

THEME	IMPACT – Positive and / or Negative	Relevant to report?
Sustainability and Carbon Reduction	N/A	No

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Previously the complaint performance has been provided within the Customer Voice Report. This new report will now be provided to Board annually in May/June and is a regulatory requirement by the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.2 The report contains the information required and set out in the Complaint handling code 2024 and landlords governing bodies are requested to provide scrutiny and challenge on the report.
- 3.3 Ongo’s current complaints performance is showing a positive trend with a 43% reduction in stage one complaints (Summary table below). **Appendix One** shows the full complaint performance for 2023/2024.



- 3.4 There has been a 71% reduction in stage two escalations in quarter 4 in 2023/2024 compared to the same quarter in 2022/2023. This has been a successful outcome of having greater focus on ensuring stage one resolutions have been improved by increasing the resource in the Customer Resolutions Team, increased in person visits with complainants and a new review mechanism at stage one. This significantly reduces the reputational risk and potential escalations to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.5 Assurance of a positive complaint culture is evidenced by only one complaint being refused during the year. This was due to the tenant not engaging with the complaint process. Through our complaint handling services we support the mechanism for easy and accessible complaint processes in line with the complaint handling code but also to

bolster our approach to listening and being tenant focussed in line with our new corporate plan.

- 3.6 We have seen 93% of stage one complaints being handled within 10 working days in line with the code requirements. A further 6% have had an agreed extension in line with the code and we have found 1% where we have failed compliance this was three complaints at stage one. There is some further work required at Stage two to ensure we are fully compliant with the code timescales, but we have put several things in place over the last month to ensure we have a focus on stage two timescales, and I am confident we will see full compliance in this financial year.

4.0 ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- 4.1 The new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code has been issued and from 1 April 2024 and is now statutory under The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Member Landlords must conduct a self-assessment exercise which is then to be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman before the end June each year. As part of this process the Self-Assessment along with this report must be presented to Board and published on our website for full transparency. To ensure the process was robust and included our tenant voice, Ongo's Tenant Complaint Panel have fed into the Self-Assessment which is seen as good practice by the Housing Ombudsman. There are no areas within the self-assessment that have been highlighted as non-compliant but there are areas for further improvement and strengthening compliance. Where there are suggested improvements, these will be implemented before 30 September 2024 and updated will be provided through the Customer Service updates. Full self-assessment in **Appendix two**
- 4.2 There have been ten new Housing Ombudsman investigations requested in 2023/2024. There have been five determinations from the Housing Ombudsman this year resulting in two findings of severe Maladministration, two for Maladministration and one for Service Failure. Two of these determinations were from case investigations from 2022/2023 due to the timescales by the Housing Ombudsman. All determinations received have been included in previous updates to Board. We currently have six cases awaiting decision with the Housing Ombudsman and one awaiting an appeal decision. Housing Ombudsman Summary table in **Appendix three** and Full determination reports in the discretionary reading should Board wish to refresh knowledge on these cases.
- 4.3 There have not been any annual Landlord reports published for the sector in 2023/2024 so far, however we anticipate that Ongo will have a report published due to the number of determinations received this year. This will be shared within a future Customer Service update report. There have been two key spotlight reports published by the Housing Ombudsman to the housing sector, these are 'Knowledge and Information Management' and 'Attitudes, Rights, and Respect.' We are currently reviewing these reports and carrying out a gap analysis exercise. Full Spotlight reports including within the discretionary reading.
- 4.4 During 2023/2024 there have been 96 learning opportunities identified through our complaint handling. The trend analysis on the sources of complaints shows that the key

area for service improvement is within our repair services. Complaint Learning Summary in **Appendix four**.

- 4.5 In addition we have also carried out learning exercises on all determinations received by the Housing Ombudsman. We have specific action plans for each determination however the overriding theme throughout these complaints was the requirement to improve our repairs service, and particularly the customer journey. This includes improving communications to our tenants during the life of a repair, ensuring we carry out the repairs within reasonable timescales and limiting delays, to ensure our records are accurate and up to date and to achieve continuous progression on more complex repair requests. To ensure we have traction on these issues the Strategic Repairs Action Group was formed and chaired by Steve Hepworth, Chief Executive Officer and we are tracking the progress through this strategic action Plan and group.

Associated background papers:

Appendix One - Complaint performance for 2023/2024

Appendix Two – Complaint Handling Code Self -Assessment

Appendix Three – Housing Ombudsman Summary Table

Appendix Four – Complaint Learning Summary

Discretionary Reading:

- Complaint Handling Code 2024 <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/the-code-2024/>
- Housing Ombudsman spotlight Reports <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/spotlight-reports/>
- Housing Ombudsman Determination Reports [Housing Ombudsman Determination Reports 23-24](#)

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