

Consultation on our Business Plan 2023-24

February 2023

Using our values to deliver an independent, visible and proactive Ombudsman

What we do

Our role

- Make the final decision on disputes between residents and member landlords. Our decisions are independent, impartial and fair
- Support effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution by others, including landlords themselves, and promote positive change in the housing sector

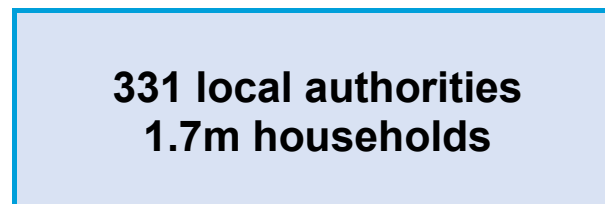
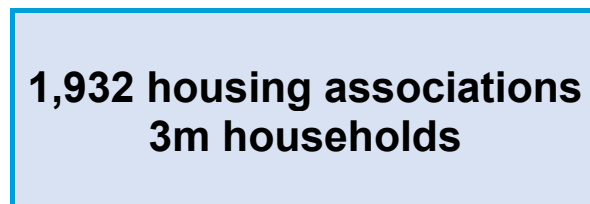
Our service is free to the 4.7 million households eligible to use it.

Our role is set out in the Housing Act 1996 and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme approved by the Secretary of State.

Our membership

Membership of the Scheme is compulsory for social landlords - primarily housing associations who are or have been registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and local authority landlords. Additionally, some private landlords are voluntary members.

Membership as at 31 March 2022



The Scheme is funded by subscriptions from members and is paid on a per housing unit basis.




Our vision, values and process

| Our vision |
|--|
| Improving residents' lives and landlords' services through housing complaints |

Our values

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>▶ Fairness</p> <p>We are independent and impartial; we take time to listen carefully and to understand the evidence</p> | <p>▶ Learning</p> <p>We share knowledge and insights to maximise our impact and improve services</p> | <p>▶ Openness</p> <p>We are accessible and accountable; we publish information on our performance and decisions</p> | <p>▶ Excellence</p> <p>We work together to provide an efficient, high-quality service</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

Our process

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|--|
|  | Dispute support | We support the resolution of complaints while they are within the landlord's complaints process |
|  | Dispute resolution | We make the final decision on complaints that remain unresolved through independent, impartial and fair investigation |
|  | Sharing learning | We use our knowledge and insight to improve housing services by sharing learning across the sector |

Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| How to respond | 3 |
| Foreword | 4 |
| Overview of our operating environment | 7 |
| Achievements in the year to date | 9 |
| Delivering our strategic programmes in year two of our Corporate Plan | 11 |
| Performance, KPI and fee impacts | 12 |
| Year two consultation on our Corporate Plan | 15 |
| Draft 2023-24 Business Plan | 17 |

How to respond

This consultation contains two sets of questions – one for residents and resident representative groups and an equivalent set for member landlords and their representative bodies. As we move into year two of our Corporate Plan and from initial planning to the delivery of our strategic programmes, responses to these questions will help to ensure our awareness raising and Centre for Learning work meets residents’ and landlords’ needs. The consultation is [available online](#) which is the preferred method of response. If you wish to respond by email, please send your feedback to communications@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. The consultation is open until 5pm on 27 February 2023. Thank you for participating.

For more information about our role and how we work see our website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Foreword

This consultation, covering year two of our [Corporate Plan](#), comes after the inquest into the tragic and preventable death of Awaab Ishak. The period following the inquest has led to another spike in enquiries and complaints to our service which has been handling unprecedented volumes of casework since 2021-22. The cost of living crisis and economic pressures will most likely lead to more disputes in the coming months. This consultation also precedes another twelve months in which the landscape of social housing regulation and the role of the Ombudsman will change, with the likely passage into law of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.

Taken together, these events mean the Ombudsman will never have had such significance: both in setting standards for local complaint handling, resolving individual disputes and promoting learning from complaints to improve services. This will require a step-change in resources to respond to both the unabated demand for independent dispute resolution and engagement with our work, if landlords are to deliver service change to prevent complaints arising.

From next year, we expect the Ombudsman to undertake over 10,000 investigations annually. This is considerably higher than the past – about a four-fold increase. These volumes could become the new normal rather than a reaction to recent events: ensuring the most vulnerable residents are aware of our service is essential as well as ensuring it offers a genuine alternative to the courts for resolving disputes.

Progress has been made. About 70% of social tenants say they are aware of the Ombudsman; this demonstrates our service is more open and accessible rather than distant and remote. However, that so many social tenants need us to investigate their complaint, and that about half result in maladministration, is concerning. This reinforces the need for us to share more learning from complaints and use of new powers to extend investigations into both sectoral issues and individual landlords where we have concerns. This is an essential part of the fabric of social housing regulation and our unique, bottom-up approach based on the daily experiences of residents using landlord services is an essential complement to the regulator's focus on its standards.

Our first priority is to ensure we have the capacity to manage the increased demand for our service. Presently, every month we receive more casework than we have caseworkers available to investigate. But we have recruited to meet this unprecedented demand, as well as implementing efficiency improvements. While the climate for recruitment has been challenging, it is evident that many people from diverse backgrounds want to work at the Ombudsman and deliver our vision. And while my team has worked

exceptionally hard at managing the high volumes, we simply have not been able to deliver as many investigations as quickly as we would like, so during 2023-24 we will require more resources so that we can meet both demand and expectations.

Crucially, the nature of our casework is changing. It is more complex and involved; we are making more findings; we are ordering more remedies; and we are, at times, struggling to piece together events given the poor evidence and records provided. Evidently, from an assessment of current investigations, a significant proportion involve highly sensitive circumstances. That we witnessed a tenfold increase in severe maladministration findings in 2021-22 underscores the seriousness of the issues we are examining. I expect our casework to achieve high-quality; moreover, that's what my colleagues want to deliver. So I am clear that despite the pressures we will not compromise on quality.

The work we do is an alternative to the courts – it is in depth investigation and not a light touch review of the landlord's final response. It is also less adversarial and a free alternative to legal action. This takes time but we also recognise it needs to be timely, given the frustration residents usually feel with the landlords' process when their case reaches us.

Over the coming year we will also further roll out our new casework portal which will allow for swifter updates on the progress of cases and support evidence gathering. This is part of our continued focus on high quality, efficient, impactful casework with high levels of customer service, and our new operating model has enabled us to provide more learning for the sector and deliver greater transparency.

This business plan will span a year of further change for social landlords. The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, subject to Parliament, could see our Complaint Handling Code taking steps towards being a statutory document and the broadening of our orders to prevent service failure being repeated. The Access to Information Scheme for housing associations, where the Ombudsman will act as the appeals body, should progress. The Ombudsman's Centre for Learning to promote fairness and service improvement for the benefit of all landlords and residents will take shape. The potential to extend redress to private tenants provides opportunities too.

The importance of learning from complaints is integral to our work as an Ombudsman. An Ombudsman promotes accountability and learning, and we use transparency to promote a positive complaint handling culture and behavioural change. The sector has been responsive, and positive, about this work with around two out of three landlords telling us they have changed something as a result. We plan more work on systemic issues whether at a landlord or sector-wide level, and we will set out how we will develop

this important role in an updated systemic framework. This work is essential if more complaints are to be resolved successfully at a landlord level and, over time, demand for our service is to reduce.

Our service is driven by our vision and our values: they inform what we do and how we do it across the organisation on a day-to-day basis. We believe these values apply equally to the sector, especially during a period where there will be significant change as fairness, a willingness to learn, openness and excellent services will ensure landlords can continue to deliver effectively for their residents who are able to live in safe, warm, secure and decent social housing.

Richard Blakeway
Housing Ombudsman

Overview of our operating environment

The legacy of Awaab Ishak

Sadly, the failures identified by the coroner in the tragic case of Awaab Ishak are replicated across our casework; poor record-keeping, lack of accessibility to the complaints system and inadequate policies are all too common. The coroner's findings were foreshadowed by the seismic increase in severe maladministration findings we have issued since 2021-22 which, in turn, led to the introduction of sensitivity assessments on our cases awaiting investigation. These consider the particular circumstances and impact of the complaint on the household and, where appropriate, the case is prioritised for allocation. This approach is balanced with allocating by age and, in the short-term while our resources are more limited, our focus will be primarily be on these highly sensitive cases. The related investigations are likely to be highly complex and, in some circumstances, the Ombudsman will use their powers to conduct further investigations into individual landlords.

We also believe that there is likely to be a greater growth in demand for investigations coming to the Ombudsman than originally planned as the current conditions – heightened media attention, actions to raise awareness of our service and apparent high levels of latent demand - mirror those of 2021-22 when demand increased by 78%. As a result, we have uplifted our demand growth forecast for 2023-24 to match that figure. We want to be ahead of this demand curve to both meet this increased need and reduce determination times over the year.

Gearing up for legislative and regulatory changes

A number of legislative and regulatory changes are expected over the remainder of our Corporate Plan period which will enable us to support a step change in awareness and accessibility, complaint handling and service delivery across the sector to benefit all residents - even if they haven't brought a complaint to us.

The first of these is a new power to issue wider learning orders on individual complaints which is contained within the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill ('the Bill'). In October, we published an update to our remedies guidance that included a new tier of compensation for severe resident detriment, this clarified where we may determine compensation levels relative to rent paid and was explicit that compensation ordered by the Ombudsman should not be offset against rent arrears. This new power will allow us to order remedies beyond the individual complaint to prevent other residents experiencing a repeat of the same problems. We will set out our approach in a further revision to our remedies guidance which will also consider how landlords recognise distress and disruption in their own awards of compensation and use their discretion in their complaints procedure.

The Bill also contains provisions to put the Complaint Handling Code on a statutory basis and gives us a duty to monitor compliance against it. To be placed on a statutory footing, the sector must be formally consulted on the Code. We will plan for this consultation during the coming year, with the expectation of a statutory go-live date at the start of 2024-25. The consultation presents an opportunity to unify the approach to complaint handling across local government and we have been working with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to produce a single Complaint Handling Code that will apply to the whole of our memberships for ease and consistency. This will be heavily based on our existing Code and highlight where legislation for council statutory duties requires a different approach to that usually mandated. We expect to start the consultation on this in early 2023-24. Work to design our approach to monitoring Code compliance will also take place during 2023-24.

Of course, proactive consumer regulation is the main focus of the Bill and our close working relationship with the Regulator of Social Housing will continue throughout the coming year. As the Regulator's plans take shape, we will be discussing how we can provide a complementary view of sector performance and use each other's work to inform our own. We will also set out how we work together in a statutory Memorandum of Understanding.

New regulation and a policy direction will also create the Access to Information Scheme with the aim of increasing transparency for housing association tenants, and we will be the appeals body for this. During 2023-24, we will continue to participate in the Department-led working group to set the framework and use this to draft proposed Scheme changes and shape our internal plans to deliver this in terms of people, processes and systems.

Expanding redress in the housing market

Since our service was established under the Housing Act 1996, the boundaries between social and private rented provision have become blurred, interconnected and complex. As a result, there are long-standing concerns over the ability of all residents to access housing redress and the confusion caused in finding the right route. This affects our service with around 25 per cent of enquiries being signposted elsewhere and 10 per cent of our investigations being wholly outside of our jurisdiction each year.

We welcome the Government's work to review redress in the wider housing market, including the White Paper on the private rented sector. During 2023-24, we will continue to work with government on our jurisdiction to help close gaps in redress and improve the customer journey.

The New Homes Ombudsman is one such move which will close gaps in redress for recent purchasers of new homes where access to redress through an existing redress provider is not available. For our member landlords, this means the Housing

Ombudsman can continue to consider complaints from residents of social landlords, including shared owners and leaseholders. During the current year we have been developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Homes Ombudsman and we will aim to publish this jointly in 2023-24 when the New Homes Ombudsman begins to operate.

The Building Safety Regulator is expected to start operating in the coming year. We will broaden our engagement with the Building Safety Regulator operational leads so we can develop effective ways of working together, sharing information and internal processes in advance of go-live to ensure that safety-related complaints falling within the remit of the Regulator are identified immediately and handed over effectively.

Cost of living

Even before the coroner's report into the preventable death of Awaab Ishak, the current operating environment was challenging for members and their residents; the cost of living crisis will add further, immediate pressures to landlords' budgets, potentially leading some to bring services back in-house or merge. These pressures will undoubtedly drive complaint volumes up and, as we have said previously, it is vitally important that complaints teams are not reduced to cut costs as they provide crucial insight into where services are not performing.

The best practice role of 'Member Responsible for Complaints' contained in our refreshed Complaint Handling Code will be a critical support to governing bodies in the coming year and we intend to deliver a package of tools to enable them to perform their role effectively.

Achievements in the year to date

Most of our activity in 2022-23 to date has been focussed on delivering the significant headcount expansion needed to meet the unprecedented surge in demand experienced during 2021-22. As we have now updated our assumptions related to growth in demand following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, our expansion programme will continue into 2023-24. To the end of January, we have appointed 196 permanent roles out of a total number of 225 vacancies, representing an expansion of 194% on our headcount as at 31 March 2022.

Demonstrating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we have operated a blind recruitment process and applied the Disability Confident scheme requirements to guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability. Of all interviewees, 29% were from

an ethnic minority background (compared to 14% nationally and 15% in social housing). Of the job offers made (totalling 204 by end of January), and where we have diversity information (77% response rate), 25% were to those from an ethnic minority background.

Other work delivered so far under our values-based corporate plan is set out below:

Extending fairness

- We successfully made the case to expand our powers and the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill includes provisions for wider learning orders on individual complaints, putting the Complaint Handling Code on a statutory basis and a duty to monitor compliance against this.
- We have reviewed our jurisdiction, investigation, outcomes and remedies guidance, incorporating some of the recommendations from the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee Report into the Regulation of Social Housing, and updated our Scheme for the removal of the Designated Persons requirements. These are all available on our website.
- We have published a Spotlight Report on noise related complaints.
- We have published two paragraph 49 reports on landlords, extending the investigation of an individual complaint to look at all complaints investigated over the following six months and providing insights to strengthen learning. A further two reports are expected to be published before year-end.
- Developed our quarterly Insight Reports so case studies contain examples of where landlords have handled complaints well.

Encouraging learning

- Landlord surveys have been completed to give us an insight into local complaint handling and the impact of our learning work. These show that 66% of landlords changed their complaints policy or process as a result of self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code and 59% had used the findings from our thematic Spotlight reports to make changes to their service delivery policies.

Increasing openness

- We refreshed our Complaint Handling Code to include much stronger provisions around landlord awareness raising and these have been incorporated into the self-assessment.
- We continue to hold Quarterly 'Meet the Ombudsman' events.

- We have begun to build a better picture of the resident demographic and geographic groups which access our service less frequently and we are working with our Accessibility Expert Panel to understand how best to target these.
- We continue to work with DLUHC to plan the Access to Information Scheme appeals service.

Achieving excellence

- We have started to develop our corporate social responsibility approach by launching a volunteering policy for colleagues alongside our annual supplier social value survey.
- We have implemented a people programme to promote and maintain high performing teams.
- We have begun to develop our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programme, relaunching the various colleague-led networks that will feed into this and promoting all aspects of EDI through our expanded workforce.
- We opened a small Manchester hub and moved to new, smaller accommodation in London which matches our needs and supports hybrid working without increasing our overall office costs.
- We have started to trial our online complaint handling portal with a small group of landlords and will continue to roll this out in managed phases.

Delivering our strategic programmes in year two of our Corporate Plan

In 2023-24, the second year of our current [Corporate Plan](#), we will have the expertise and capacity to make a real impact against our strategic programmes, as well as delivering a marked increase in the volume of cases we investigate and support. The planned developments for each programme are set out below:

- Our strategic intelligence-led approach to Dispute Support will shift our resident support to much earlier in our process and empower them to take forward their complaint by increasing the volume of tools and guidance on our website. Our support work will focus on where there is evidence that the landlord's complaint handling process has failed. We will also start to gather data and other intelligence to identify landlords to work with to improve their complaint handling for the benefit of all residents and trial various ways of doing this. We will also test advocacy and advice agencies' appetite for regular training from us so their staff can support social housing residents more effectively.
- Our Centre for Learning will begin to take shape with a greater number and range of learning tools available to members via our website. This will be complemented through established partnerships with sector organisations to deliver training and learning

opportunities through digital and face-to-face means, providing members with opportunities to share experiences and best practice. We will also host an event for those holding the 'Member Responsible for Complaints' role under the Complaint Handling Code and consider if this should be an annual event.

- Our programme on awareness raising will continue, with a particular focus on understanding the barriers faced by residents in accessing our service directly. This will include targeting groups that use our service less frequently, and increasing the understanding of our role and the difference complaints can make. We will also continue to raise awareness with key stakeholder groups through regular communications and briefings, and with residents through our 'Meet the Ombudsman' visits.
- Our employer brand programme will strengthen our employer value proposition and, in doing so, deliver an internal virtual academy for staff to support their learning and development, and develop an apprenticeship programme. We will implement more of our CSR strategy through community engagement and volunteering, and grow our diverse workforce as outlined in our EDI strategy.
- Our digital programme will see the further roll-out of our online complaint handling portal.

More detail on the activities sitting behind these plans is set out in the draft Business Plan below.

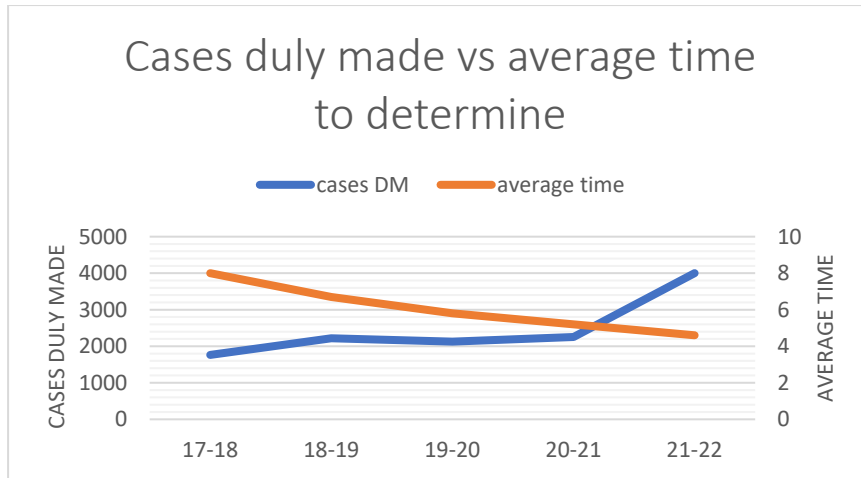
Performance, KPIs and fee impact

Performance

Our service has delivered value for money over the last five years:

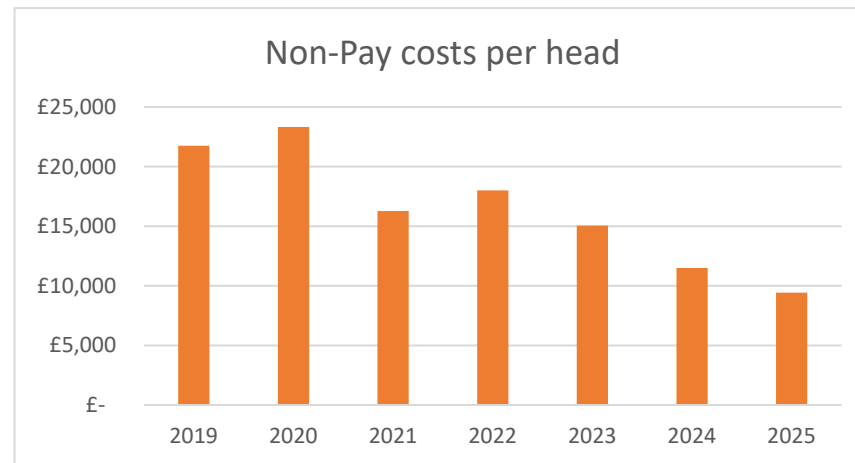
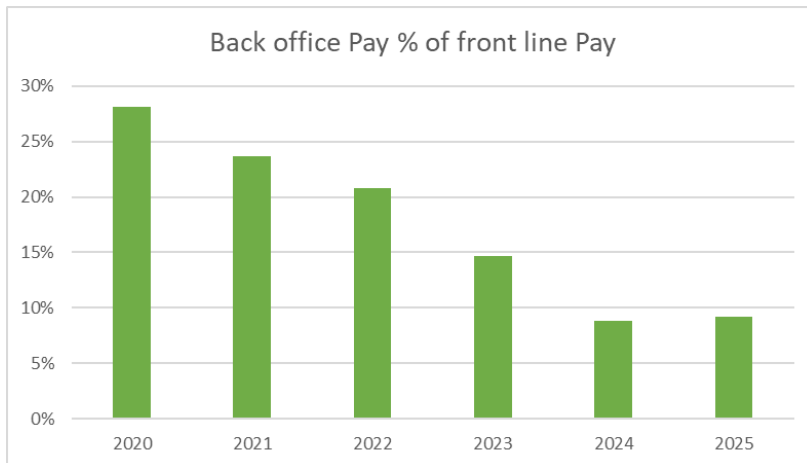
On timeliness:

- We have continued to bring down average determination times, despite year-on-year increases in demand.



On costs:

- We have also delivered efficiency savings by reducing overheads, enhancements to internal processes, use of digital solutions and a targeted approach to delivering value for money.



On impact:

- The impact of our learning reports is far reaching with 66% of landlords who responded to our annual survey stating that they had changed their complaint policy or process as a result of our work and 59% changing policies related to service delivery.

Key performance indicators

The unprecedented 2021-22 surge in complaints has made social housing a high complaints sector, averaging nine Ombudsman complaints per ten thousand households for that year. This is considerably higher than the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and just short of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. In the first half of 2022-23, complaint volumes stabilised at this new, higher benchmark but the removal of the Designated Person requirements at the start of October created an expected surge in incoming volumes, compounded by further increases following the publication of the coroner's report on the tragic death of Awaab Ishaq. We anticipate continued increases in demand due to the removal of this barrier and on-going media coverage.

Our performance to date is on track against all of our KPIs with the exception of the six and 12-month timeliness targets as these are highly sensitive to small changes in demand and/or resource levels. Since 2021-22, more cases have been referred to us for investigation each month than we have caseworkers available to investigate. This necessitated a significant expansion to our casework team as set out in the 2022-23 business plan. As with any programme at such a scale and in the current and uncertain recruitment climate, minor delays have inevitably occurred during the year, and the time required to recruit, onboard and train new starters means the focus for this year has been on transitioning to a larger casework team and responding to higher volumes, rather than further reducing overall investigation times.

To reflect the impact of this transition and the consequences of moving from a purely age-based allocation model to one that includes case sensitivity, our timeliness KPI targets have been adjusted to achieving 95% of cases determined within six months and 99% of cases determined within 12 months by the end of 2024-25. We expect to start meeting these timescales in the second half of 2023-24.

Fees

Our original planning, based on a 30% increase to 2022-23 case volumes, came to an expected chargeable fee of £4.74 per home with a total budget equivalent to £5.59 per home by offsetting the surplus arising this year from recruitment delays.

Having revisited and uplifted our demand assumptions following heightened media coverage of the sector and government actions to raise awareness of our service, we expect the chargeable fee to increase to £5.90 per home with a total budget equivalent to £6.75 per home, after applying the carried forward surplus. The actual chargeable fee may reduce in our final 2023-24 Business Plan if we carry forward a greater surplus than currently forecast.

We recognise this is above the fee ceiling of £5.30, but the current circumstances are exceptional. We want to be prepared for higher demand and significantly reduce waiting times for legacy cases in 2023-24; the higher fee will allow us to do both of those things. If demand assumptions are not realised, we will be able to reduce the age of cases determined in-year more quickly, and we would expect to reduce the total fee in 2024-25, subject to any other unexpected circumstances. Of the total pay budget for 2023-24, nearly 85% is budgeted for casework roles.

Year two consultation on our Corporate Plan

We consulted extensively on our 2022-25 Corporate Plan including the strategic objectives, expected performance levels and fees. Activity in our first year has been largely focussed on supporting the significant headcount expansion. As we move into more detailed planning to support the delivery of our strategic programmes in year two, this consultation seeks views from our customers to inform their development, help us to understand the challenges and deliver what is needed. This year, we want to gain insights into awareness raising and the Centre for Learning.

There are two sets of questions below - one seeking views from our residents and their representative bodies, the other from landlords and their representative bodies. The survey will ask whether you are answering the landlord or resident questions and then take you to the relevant set. We would like responses to the following consultation questions:

Residents and their representative bodies:

1. What materials or resources would help increase your awareness of who we are and what we do?
2. Are there any specific actions we should take that you feel would improve access to the Housing Ombudsman Service?

3. Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service?
 - If you answered 'No' to question 3, what would help to improve your understanding?
4. How could you/your organisation help us to build awareness and understanding of our role?
5. What are the top three issues that affect the quality of your home/the homes of residents you support?
6. What would be the most effective actions your landlord could take to improve its complaint handling?
7. What information would most effectively help guide you through your landlord's complaints process?
8. Do you have any other comments on our plans?

Landlords and their representative bodies:

1. What materials or resources could we develop that would support you to raise awareness of the Housing Ombudsman Service?
2. What in your view, would improve resident access to the Ombudsman?
3. Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service?
 - If you answered 'No' to question 3, what would help to improve your understanding?
4. How could you help us to build awareness and understanding of our role with your residents?
5. What are the three most important issues that affect the quality of your homes or the services you provide to residents?
6. What would be the most effective actions you could take to improve your own complaint handling?
7. If we were to develop more learning and support tools, which areas/topics would you most like us to target? And what formats would be most useful for complaint handlers, executives and members of governing bodies?
8. Do you have any other comments on our plans?

Strategic Objective 1: Extending fairness

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|---|---|---|
| <p>1.1. Strategic, intelligence-led approach to dispute support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted landlord support to improve complaint handling for all residents Residents and landlords are empowered to resolve complaints earlier and locally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test partners' appetite for support to improve their advocacy and advice services Enhance our enquiries service to provide more support up-front to help residents to resolve their complaint Target our support work where there is evidence the landlord's complaint handling has failed and work with selected landlords to improve their complaint handling Plan for our future outsourced enquiries service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of residents are satisfied with the service provided at dispute support Baseline the impact of strategic interventions |
| <p>1.2. Strengthening the framework for the Ombudsman investigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate, findings from individual cases benefit all residents Restoring the landlord-resident relationship through appropriate redress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the deep dive reviews of our policies and guidance documents covering remedies, and orders & recommendations Deliver other mediated routes to redress Begin to implement our approach to specialisms and subject matter experts Quality Board is recruited and meetings are held | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of residents whose complaint was upheld were satisfied with the service provided 50% of the residents whose complaint was not upheld were satisfied with the service provided 98% compliance with orders within 3 months 100% compliance with orders within 6 months |

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remedies, orders and recommendations have an impact on landlord services Our inquisitorial approach is enhanced through specialisms Quality Board with external members provides assurance over our approach | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of quality assurance reviews find casework was acceptable or better 95% of cases are decided within six months by 2024-25 99% of cases are decided within 12 months by 2024-25 |
| <p>1.3. Enhanced thematic insights and systemic investigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Spotlight reports build a picture of the quality of residents' homes We undertake systemic investigations where we identify serious or repeated complaint handling failure We are responsive to other issues or themes as they arise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and publish our updated systemic framework Develop the use of Type 3 CHFOs Develop and implement the approach to monitoring previous Spotlight reports Build and maintain our relationships with regulators and other Ombudsman schemes Where a paragraph 49 investigation is initiated, complete and publish the final report within 10 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish at least two Spotlight reports Publish four Insight Reports |
| <p>1.4. Supporting the review into extending our powers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a picture of where increased powers would benefit residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A - Delivered | |

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| <p>1.5. Growing our membership and closing gaps in redress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic expansion of voluntary members • Inform government policy to reduce housing redress complexity and close gaps for residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with government to discuss the future of redress in the housing market • Subject to legislation, agree the statutory MoU with the Regulator of Social Housing • Agree a MoU with the Building Safety Regulator • Finalise and publish a MoU with the New Homes Ombudsman | |

Strategic Objective 2: Encouraging learning

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|--|---|---|
| <p>2.1. Establish a Centre for Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the sector's complaint handling through an integrated offer, differentiated by role and landlord type | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with members to establish their learning needs and preferences Start to build the Centre for Learning Continue to deliver learning content, diversified by audience and landlord type Consider how to most effectively invite stakeholders to propose topics for systemic investigation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline the impact of activities to support landlord learning Increase the level of landlord engagement with our learning tools over this corporate plan period compared to the previous period |
| <p>2.2. Driving a positive complaints culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlords and residents can understand each member's performance based on the complaints we have investigated Landlord governing bodies are better able to hold their organisation to account for its complaints handling Landlords are aware of current and future complaints handling challenges Landlords have insight into groups or complaint types that may face | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write to all landlords with high maladministration rates and monitor their response Publish the Annual Complaints Review by September 2023 Hold an event dedicated to supporting the Member Responsible for Complaints role Subject to legislation, consult on a statutory Complaint Handling Code Design our approach to monitoring Code compliance and test with stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPI to be developed during 2023-24 to measure the impact/outcome of the duty to monitor |

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| barriers in accessing or progressing complaints through their procedure | | |

Strategic Objective 3: Increasing openness

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|--|---|--|
| <p>3.1. Raise awareness of our service, build understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More residents are aware of our service and understand the benefits of alternative dispute resolution • Improved access to the Ombudsman amongst groups that have not used our service in the past | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake targeted work to raise awareness with resident demographic and geographic groups that are not accessing our service as much as others • Publish the conclusions of the Accessibility Expert Panel • Develop the 'Meet the Ombudsman' model and hold at least four events around England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline awareness of the Ombudsman and the impact of awareness raising activities |
| <p>3.2. Work collaboratively with partner organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved signposting to our service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve signposting between housing-related Ombudsman schemes | |
| <p>3.3. Prepare for go-live of the Access to Information Scheme appeals service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals under the Access to Information Scheme are delivered on time and in a fair way | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with DLUHC and plan the implementation of the Access to Information Scheme appeals service | |

Strategic Objective 4: Achieving excellence

| Strategic priorities and outcomes | Year two deliverables (2023-24) | Key performance indicators |
|---|--|---|
| <p>4.1. Develop our employer brand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are accredited as a top 100 place to work and regarded as a socially responsible, diverse and inclusive employer • We are an employer of choice • Colleagues are positive about their learning and development opportunities and take advantage of these | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an integrated people programme for all staff • Start to recruit apprentices • Implement our CSR strategy • Expand our EDI programme • Set out our employer value proposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of staff have received people programme training |
| <p>4.2. Continue our digitisation journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a fully digital complaint handling channel for landlords and residents • Our back-office systems are more efficient and effective • Our digital office supports effective hybrid working | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further roll out of the online complaint handling portal, and plan for extension to residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage every landlord in receipt of a landlord performance report with onboarding to the portal |