

Governing Body's Response to the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

Our 2024/25 Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment demonstrates Onward's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. It also outlines the actions that we have taken to address the causes of customers' dissatisfaction and improve our complaint handling services.

The self-assessment and the Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report have been scrutinised by our Executive Team, Board members, and members of our Customer Engagement Community. All parties involved in the review recognise the importance of effective complaint management in ensuring that we are delivering the very best in customer care, driving improvements to our services, and meeting the standards set out in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

By incorporating the insights and best practices identified through our learning and improvement activities, feedback from customers, the Ombudsman, and the self-assessment process, we have continued to deliver improvements in our complaints service. Over the course of 2024/25 we have:

- Resolved 66% more complaints than last year and increased the proportion of complaints resolved within 10 days. This reflects our focus on ensuring timely responses to complaints.
- Received a greater number of customer compliments, demonstrating that residents are recognising a positive improvement in front line services.
- Expanded our learning and improvement activities to encourage greater scrutiny over our complaint's performance, drive improvements and strengthen our complaint handling culture.
- Focused on getting ahead of complaints at an early stage and being more responsive, resulting in fewer maladministration findings. The Governing Body is also encouraged that we have maintained our exemplary record of full compliance with all Orders issued by the Ombudsman.

Opportunities for improvement

The Governing Body acknowledges the efforts of both colleagues and involved customers in identifying opportunities to learn and implementing measures to improve our service in response to customer feedback.

However, there has been an increase in complaints which is disappointing. Whilst we concur with the Ombudsman that a high volume of complaints indicates an accessible and effective complaints system, it also reflects that there are areas where we need perform better.

We are committed to continuing our efforts to improve services and reduce complaints, supported by our dedication to fostering a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We recognise that although complaints can be challenging, they offer valuable insights into areas where we fail to meet customers' expectations. We are determined to address the issues identified in this report and implement substantive changes which build upon the improvements implemented over the past year.

Next steps

The Governing Body and the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) will maintain oversight of complaints improvement activities and action plans. The 'Learning into Action' framework will continue to analyse and investigate the types and root causes of complaints and identify areas for service improvement.

In May 2025, the second phase of our organisation-wide customer service training programme will begin. This training is intended to shape the customer-centric culture and enhance colleagues' customer care skills, focusing on resolving customer enquiries and complaints at the earliest stage possible.

Lessons learned from both upheld and not upheld complaints will be used to drive service improvements across all operations. The customer voice will continue to be utilised to refine processes, and the Governing Body will monitor the progress of the Learning into Action framework and various action plans through regular performance reports.

Responsibility for this statement rests with the Common Board of Onward Group and Onward Homes. This statement was approved by the Board on 11 June 2025.

Member Responsible for Complaints: Karl Tupling, Non-Executive Director

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl Tupling', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Date: 11th June 2025