



First Wave Housing Limited Board Meeting

FWH Annual Complaints Report 2023/2024

No. of Appendices:	Appendix A – FWH Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code Appendix B – Revised FWH Complaints Policy
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Natoyah Vincent Strategic Support Officer Natoyah.Vincent@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This annual report sets out First Wave Housing complaints performance for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 1.2 The report also includes FWH’s self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, found in Appendix A.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Board are asked to note the proposed changes to the complaints policy in Appendix B and provide feedback or approval.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 During the reporting period, FWH received one formal complaint and one MP’s enquiry, both of which were addressed and resolved within the prescribed timeframes. Below are the details of each case:
- 3.2 *Complaint one – Oven Repair Issue*
- 3.2.1 A tenant reported that the oven in their property had not been working since the start of their tenancy. They raised the issue multiple times, emphasising the urgency due to the need to cook for their baby. White

goods are typically the tenant's responsibility after being gifted at the start of tenancies, the oven was repaired at no cost to the tenant since it was claimed to be defective from the beginning. Repairs were initiated by the Housing Companies Operational Manager and carried out promptly through our contract with A4All Appliances.

3.3 *Complaint two – MP Enquiry*

3.3.1 In January 2024, a tenant raised concerns about their housing situation through an MP enquiry, seeking clarity on their tenancy status, property repairs, and overcrowding concerns. The tenant has been housed under the Settled Homes Scheme since 2011, these properties were purchased using grant funding and let as long-term temporary accommodation. The grant conditions require that these tenancies be converted to assured tenancies, let at affordable rents. This work is scheduled to take place next year. The Housing Companies Tenant Services Manager (HCTSM) reached out to the tenant to introduce themselves as a direct contact for repairs and tenancy related issues. The Housing Companies Operational Manager clarified the temporary status of the tenancy in his response to the MP and advised the tenant to continue bidding for social housing through Ealing Council, where they are eligible.

3.4 Overall, FWH effectively managed these two formal complaints, demonstrating a strong commitment to responsive service. The prompt handling of the oven repair complaint highlights FWH's proactive approach to tenant concerns, ensuring that essential repairs are prioritised, particularly when they affect family well-being. The second complaint, initiated through an MP enquiry, showcased FWH's transparency and willingness to engage with external stakeholders. The outreach by the Tenant Services Manager provided the tenant with a direct line of communication, fostering trust and clarity regarding their housing situation. Both cases were resolved within the stipulated timeframes, reflecting FWH's adherence to its complaints policy and dedication to continuous improvement in service delivery.

3.5 In addition to this annual report, Housing Management Service (HMS) will now be providing bi-annual reports to the Board providing updates on complaints performance, trends, and actions taken to improve service delivery.

4.0 **Self- Assessment Against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**

4.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, establishing best practices for managing complaints, including clear expectations for:

- Stages of the complaints process
- Timescales for responses

- Information required in responses
- 4.2 FWH conducted a self-assessment and identified the following areas of non-compliance:
- 4.3 *Section 2.4 - Excluding Complaints*
- 4.3.1 The Code mandates that if a complaint is not accepted, landlords must provide an explanation to the resident, including reasons why the matter is unsuitable for the complaints process and the right to escalate the decision to the Ombudsman. Currently, FWH's complaints policy does not address this requirement. The policy has been updated in Appendix B, under section 3.4, to ensure residents receive written explanations when complaints are not accepted, including information on escalation rights.
- 4.4 *Section 3.5 – Publicising the Complaints Policy*
- 4.4.1 The Code requires landlords to explain how the complaints policy will be publicised, including details about the Ombudsman and the Code itself. FWH's current policy does not outline any steps for publicising its complaints process. The policy has been updated, under section 6, to detail how the complaints procedure will be shared with residents, both online and through direct communication, to improve transparency and accessibility.
- 4.5 *Section 5.2 – Resolving Issues Early*
- 4.5.1 The Code emphasises the importance of resolving issues early and discourages adding extra complaint stages to avoid confusion. The current FWH policy does not specify how complaints resolved at the first point of contact will be handled. The policy has been expanded, under section 3.5, to include guidance on addressing issues early and ensuring a consistent approach.
- 4.6 *Section 5.9 – Keeping Residents Updated*
- 4.6.1 The Code requires that when a response to a complaint will exceed the set timescales, landlords must agree on suitable intervals to update the resident on progress. The FWH complaints policy currently lacks details on how residents will be kept informed in such situations. The policy has been revised, under section 3.6, to include provisions for maintaining regular updates and setting clear expectations for communication during extended investigations.
- 4.7 *Section 6.8 – Handling Additional Complaints*

- 4.7.1 The Code mandates that additional complaints raised during an investigation must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if related or logged as new complaints if unrelated. FWH's current policy does not specify how such scenarios will be managed. The proposed update provides instructions to officers on handling and documenting additional complaints during investigations under section 3.6.

- 4.8 The Board are asked to approve the updated Complaints Policy in Appendix B, which seeks to address each of these gaps to ensure future best practice and compliance with the Code.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 FWH has redrafted its complaints policy to address these gaps, ensuring full compliance with the Code and alignment with the wider Council policy. The revised policy is presented to the Board for approval here, and the company will continue to carry out annual self-assessments against the Code and monitor any changes in regulatory and legislative requirements to ensure ongoing compliance.