

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Newlon Board's response to Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

The Board reviewed these documents at specially arranged Board meetings to allow sufficient time for review, scrutiny and discussion. We reviewed both the self-assessment against the Code and the Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report. We believe that these documents represent a thorough, detailed and honest review of our performance, strengths and weaknesses.

We acknowledge the distance travelled over the past year in terms of changing our culture around complaints. Our 'Trust Newlon' change programme aims to improve services and resident satisfaction and has prioritised the areas that residents told us were most important to them. Two years into that work, we have made significant progress in terms of our performance and our latest staff survey shows increased confidence levels amongst staff in terms of service quality and improvement.

The Board welcomed the clarity that the self-assessment provides on where we need to improve. We share the concerns of our Residents' Forum about whether we are sufficiently resourced to respond consistently to all complaints. We have been assured that a further three posts have been agreed so that work in this important area continues and this will be kept under close review.

We have asked for a deeper dive into Housing Ombudsman cases around property condition which will take place at our Residents' Services Committee. We have said that we would like to see more scrutiny and regular oversight on complaint responses to ensure that the quality is high and all issues are dealt with. We also have concerns about the time taken to deliver on our complaint promises but we have been assured that the executive has this in hand with improved reporting visibility, escalations and staffing.

The Board noted both the volume and proportion of complaints about repairs and recognised that we have an opportunity to strengthen relationships and refocus on the contractual requirements of our repairs contractors as we will shortly be retendering our main contract.

The Board felt we should be doing more to communicate to residents about how seriously we take complaints and how we use them to improve our service and make changes. We will continue to focus on complaints and service improvement. We believe that the Board Member responsible for complaints (MRC), Residents' Services Committee and our Residents' Forum provide the oversight needed for this focus.

We are satisfied that the plans the executive have in place will strengthen our performance where needed and that these reflect the areas the Board believe need to be prioritised.



Aman Dalvi OBE – Chair of Newlon Board