

SO Self Assessment Improvement Report December 2024

Reporting Period: 1st October 2023 – 30th September 2024

Subject:

Annual Southern Oaks Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report & Board Feedback

Author:

Martin King, Director of Business and Operations – Complaints Officer for SO Date: December 2024

Purpose of the Report

Southern Oaks (SO) will endeavour to complete an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code, this report being the first. This report should set out details of the number of complaints received, broken down by complaint type, stage and any referrals to the HOS. It will also detail any trends, lessons learned, and service improvements identified and implemented. It is published alongside the selfassessment on our website.

1. Background

SO is a long-standing provider of Social, Affordable, Key Worker, Tenant and Leaseholder Housing. SO has charitable status and has 7 units of accommodation. SO has a strong relationship with several local authorities including Epsom & Ewell, Sutton, Croydon and Chelsea and Kensington.

2. Summary of Complaints Received

We acknowledge the difference between a concern and a complaint but choose to carry out the same robust process, treating all concerns and complaints fairly and objectively to bring a speedy conclusion to all concerns/complaints made during the year.

We received the following complaints within this first year of reporting 10/23 through to 10/24:

- We received complaints in three main categories: Residents, Property and Catering.
- Concerns and Complaints specific to Residents ranged from anti-social behaviour, Pet behaviour, Catering ranged from quality to quantity and consistency of service and Residents ranged from care services and vulnerable adults.
- In total there were 7 complaints (Residents x 3, Property x 4 & Catering x 2), the 14 concerns (Residents 4, Property x 5 & Catering 5).
- Each of these were carried out in line with our complaints policy and all concerns were handled within Stage 1 within a reasonable time frame (28 days).
- There were no referrals to the HOS.
- Our recent and ongoing review did find some deficiencies within our policy and procedure benchmarked against the code. We minimised risk by creating an easy access location on our website with links to make the pathway to making a complaint more transparent. We have also updated our training schedule to focus on resident behaviour so we can be assured that residents/tenants understand how to make a complaint.
- We have adapted our policy to meet the complaints code accordingly.
- We recognise that there were only a few complaints received from our Sheltered Houses during 2023/24 reporting period.



- We have reduced the risk of not catching complaints via increased staff training and signposting to make a clear pathway to making a complaint.
- We are happy to report that we do not see a significant number of complaints and that as and when they arrive our procedures are embedded for staff to follow, albeit that we recognise there is still work to be done to increase visibility.
- The recent TSM survey had robust feedback, and residents indicated a 74% satisfaction.
- This being our first time of reporting, we have focussed on establishing a clear pathway for everybody to follow when making a complaint, ensuring that the correct complaint procedure is followed.
- A large proportion of our services are allocated to sheltered housing accommodation that are staffed during work hours only. We have found that most issues recorded can be swiftly addressed and resolved, meaning we often do not see many complaints. However, it is possible that during this transition period, complaints have been dealt with but not recorded under the ASO complaint procedure.
- As we move forward and adapt to the Code, we can confirm that all new complaints will be reviewed by the Complaints Officer and appropriately managed and recorded via the correct procedure.

3. Oversight of Complaints

The Director of Business and Operations (DBO) is appointed as the Complaints Officer for SO. Nick Shore, Board Chairman for SO has been appointed as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

- All complaints are recorded, with an oversight from the Executive Leadership Team and reported to the DBO who reports into senior Board members monthly. When a complaint is received the Complaints Officer will:
 - Review the complaint to establish the most appropriate procedure to follow.
 - Where the complaint is logged as a concern or complaint the SO Complaint Procedure will be followed.
 - The Complaint Officer will appoint an Investigating member of staff Jo Taylor (Community Manager) in the first instance or Della Stewart (Senior House Manager in the second).
 - These members will retain oversight of the complaint through to resolution or, where applicable, when referred to the DBO.
 - The DBO will report complaints to the senior Board member monthly via the Services Committee.
 - The Complaint Officer will complete an annual self-assessment against the Code and produce an annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement report.
 - The DBO will seek feedback and comment from the Board on the annual self-assessment and report.
 - Each complaint will be followed up with a lessons learned exercise involving relevant teams and staff members, to establish any areas for service improvement, to prevent repeat complaints and drive-up standards.
 - The Complaint Officer will report monthly to the MRC via the services committee on all concerns/complaints/feedback/lessons learned.

4. Feedback and Service Improvements Lessons Learned

We will endeavour to carry out a Lessons Learned following each concern/complaint, a lessons learnt exercise is completed with the Complaints Officer, Investigating Manager (Executive team Leadership) and any staff, contractors or third parties, to look at any learning or any improvements or changes needed, to improve service delivery, tenant satisfaction and prevent repeat complaints. To further enhance transparency, we have recommended that all complaints and concerns have an agenda point on the monthly Services Committee, attended by senior management staff and trustees.



Complaint Satisfaction Surveys

As this is our first year of reporting we will continue to enhance our platform, in the knowledge that we focus on the process of developing a complaint satisfaction survey, that will be offered to all complainants whenever a complaint is closed, and this will feed into the lessons learned exercise.

TSM Tenant Perception Survey In the 2023/24 results

From the existing 7 units of accommodation, we had a participation of 70% from the residents/tenants that we house.

- One house did not take part by choice.
- 74% of those that answered the TSM were satisfied with the overall performance.
- Residents/Tenants that reported or made a complaint, had an overall satisfaction of how their complaint was dealt with at 84%.
- Out of 51 respondents, 46 (90%) reported that they knew how to make a complaint.
- All though we have scored a satisfactory result, we are focussed to improve on existing measures taken. Further staff training around identifying complaints and ensuring that our complaints procedure is easily accessible and well promoted, and signposting that all complaints are now managed centrally by the Complaints Officer.
- As this is first year of reporting we have made a link within a prominent position on page 1 of our website so that that our complaints procedure, access to the complaint form, the self-assessment survey with our Boards feedback and the TMS survey have a linked process for easy access.
- We anticipate that the actions we are now taking will assist in creating a more robust complaints procedure, as well as being accessible on our website.
- The lessons learned process will ensure all complaints are recorded and responded to in line with the correct procedure.
- The annual Tenant Feedback works in conjunction with the DBO and senior trustees at board level to shape procedures as we move forward.
- We also have a team of volunteers that also give their feedback with their involvement including coffee mornings, quizzes, arts and crafts and monthly events. This will inevitably play its part as we strategize to improve.
- Residents are also supported via there Residents Support Group (Sheltered House Meetings) that regularly sit with senior management to feedback on all issues ranging from individual to collective issues.
- SO provide regular feedback via concern issues as they are collected, and we post the results via a resident's question register and Individual Sheltered House meeting minutes on their respective notice boards.

5. Positive Complaint Handling Culture

SO Board Members are committed to developing a positive complaint handling culture within the organisation and recognise the value of receiving complaints as a way of improving service delivery and tenant satisfaction. To achieve this, the following work has already been completed:

- Improved Complaints Procedure which is aimed to be compliant with the HOS Code.
- Process ensuring complaints are dealt with correctly and via the correct complaint procedure.
- DBO appointed as the Complaint Officer with oversight of all complaints.
- Board Member appointed as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).
- Acknowledgement that we continue to strive for a better complaints service and that we recognise that staff training is enhanced to confirm that our mandatory training through each year is up to date.



- New links relating to the complaint's procedure highlighted on our website and clear signposting for access to the complaint's procedure.
- Complaints procedures for staff and residents with links to attachments including template forms and letters so that managers can follow to ensure consistency and provide guidance for Executive Team Leadership to ensure compliance with the Code.
- Website links updated to align with the Code.

SO intend to further embed a positive complaint handling culture includes:

- Annual complaint satisfaction survey to be developed and issued to complainants after every complaint.
- Continued updates to the website for accessibility and transparency, in line with the Complaints Procedure.
- Continuance of the TSM tenant perception survey to include a link to the Complaints Procedure on our website.
- Staff training across the organisation on how to recognise and respond to a complaint.

6. Comments from the Member Responsible for Complaints and Board

The MRC felt that the self-assessment was clear and easy to follow, however we do acknowledge the perceived lack of complaints received by our Sheltered Housing units during the reporting period. Most resident/tenants completed and took part in the Tenants Perception Survey and were regularly asked if there were any issues that needed to be reported, the MRC recommends some improvements regarding the pathway to make a complaint that involves changes to the location of complaint forms, easy access links on our website and staff training.

This work is already underway as we update our website by using a prominent position for Complaints with easy access links. We acknowledged that a resident/tenant can seem to be happy and content, but there may well be an underlying issue that has not been brought to light. Therefore, we have focused on adapting our staff training to act as a trigger point to identify if any concerns and complaints need to be highlighted. Whilst recognising the difference between a concern and a complaint we treat them as the same and follow our procedure with the same vigour.

As we restructure our administration files, it is hoped that this will create an increase in transparency with easy staff access to our policies and procedures, particularly the Complaint Policy and Procedures. Clear communications coupled with accurate and robust recording of resident/tenant feedback will act as a pathway to resolve and prevent complaints occurring.

Registered Office:
Southern Oaks Nonsuch
Old Schools Lane
Ewell
Surrey
KT17 1FL

Telephone
020 8394 0050

Registered Charity No:247308/ Regulator of Social Housing H1185/ Company No: 734705

Your Complaint

Please fill in this form and provide it to our senior House Manager or Community Manager at:
Nonsuch Abbeyfield, Old Schools Lane, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1FL.

| | |
|--|--|
| Name | |
| Address for reply | |
| Contact details | |
| Address of your home (if different from above) | |

In the space below, it would be helpful if you were able to tell us about your concern. It would assist us greatly if you were able to mention as many details as possible. As a recommendation, you might want to follow this pathway:

- Who was involved?
- What happened?
- Timeline of events that took place.
- Explain your concern and what in your opinion would be an acceptable outcome.

Please provide as much information as possible to help us consider all the facts and respond quickly.

If you would like us to send a copy of this form to someone else who may be able to help sort out your complaint, please fill in their details below.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Name | |
| Address for reply | |
| Contact details | |
| Your signature | |
| Date: | |

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