

SORL Self Assessment Improvement Report August 2026

Reporting Period: 30th March 2025 – 1st April 2026

Subject:

Southern Oaks Retirement Living Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report & Board Feedback

Author:

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Purpose of the Report

Southern Oaks Retirement Living (SORL) will complete an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code. This report provides details of the complaints received during the reporting period, including complaint type, stage, and any referrals to the HOS. It also outlines key trends, lessons learned, and the service improvements identified and implemented. The report is published on our website alongside the annual self-assessment.

1. Background

Following our exit from the Abbeyfield umbrella, SORL continues with its philosophy, traditions and values as a long-standing provider of social, affordable, key worker, tenant and leaseholder housing. SORL holds charitable status and provides seven units of accommodation. It also maintains strong relationships with several local authorities, including Epsom & Ewell, Sutton, Croydon, and Kensington and Chelsea.

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 year of reporting March 25 through to Apr 26:

- We have generally received complaints in three main categories: Residents/Tenants, Property and Catering.
- The above broadly are within the same categories and range from the previous year. Whilst the frequency of concern/complaint increased, the nature and dispersal of the concern/complaint decreased.
- Concerns and Complaints specific to Residents/Tenants ranged from anti-social behaviour, maintenance repairs, and catering ranged from the quantity and consistency of service and some concerns relating to the quality-of-care services (signposting only as we are an independent living provider).
- In total there were 6 complaints (Residents x 3, Property x 2 & Catering x 1), and 12 concerns (Residents 5, Property x 4 & Catering 3).
- 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.
- Following the review we found that easy access to concern/complaint forms located in a central location for all units, as well as on our website made the pathway to making a complaint more transparent and was well received.
- Our revised training approach focuses on residents and tenants, enabling earlier intervention, reducing confusion, and helping to manage anxiety-related behaviours. Greater transparency in the complaint's pathway, alongside easier access to the process, has also helped tenants feel more empowered and less frustrated.



- We recognise that there were no significant complaints that could not be resolved within stage 1 of our complaints policy, received from our Sheltered Houses during 2025/26 reporting period.
- We feel that amendments brought in for this year 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 pleased to report that complaint numbers remain low. When complaints are received, established procedures are in place for staff to follow, although we recognise that further work is needed to improve visibility and accessibility.
- This year's reporting has focussed on establishing a clear pathway for everybody to follow when making a complaint, ensuring that the correct complaint procedure is followed.
- This year's review has identified that some concerns fall outside of our staff working hours during the week. We now have a dedicated 24/7 emergency call provider to our affordable and social sheltered housing accommodation. This has led tenants feeling more secure and safe as the service provided is robust and reliable.
- 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 Chief executive Officer (CEO) is appointed as the Complaints Officer for SORL. NS, Board Chairman for SORL 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 CEO who reports into senior Board members. 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 SORL Complaint Procedure will be followed.
- The Complaints Officer will appoint an investigating member of staff in the first instance, either JT, Community Manager. If required, DS, Senior House Manager, will be appointed in the second instance.
- These members will retain oversight of the complaint through to resolution or, where applicable, when referred to the CEO.
- The CEO will report complaints to the senior Board member 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 CEO 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

Following each concern or complaint, a lessons learned exercise will be completed with the Complaints Officer, the Investigating Manager, relevant members of the Executive Leadership Team, and any staff, contractors or third parties involved. This process will identify learning, service improvements or changes required to improve service delivery, increase tenant satisfaction and help prevent repeat complaints. To further strengthen transparency and oversight, all complaints and concerns will be included as a standing agenda item at the monthly Services Committee, attended by senior management staff and trustees.



Complaint Satisfaction Surveys

Our in-depth biannual resident/tenant satisfaction survey is due to be completed at the end of 2026, with findings to be reported in 2027. This year's complaint review highlighted a reduction in the frequency of complaints, particularly in relation to the time taken to resolve matters to the satisfaction of residents and tenants. These findings will inform the lessons learned review.

Complaints Review Survey – 2025/26 results

- Data taken from the existing 7 units of accommodation.
- There were no concerns from two houses.
- Residents/Tenants were satisfied by the easy access forms to make a concern/complaint.
- Residents/Tenants that reported or made a complaint, were satisfied with how their complaint was dealt with.
- Out of 6 complaints and 12 concerns made all were handled within stage 1 (within 28 days).
- The survey conveyed a satisfactory result, however, we remain focused on improving the measures already in place. This includes continuing staff training on identifying complaints, ensuring our complaints procedure is accessible to all, and signposting that all complaints are now managed centrally by the Complaints Officer.
- Our Complaints policy and Procedure is published at the foot of page 1 on our website so that our complaints procedure, access to the complaint form, the self-assessment survey with our Boards feedback and this survey have a linked process for easy access.
- The actions taken thus far have assisted us in creating a robust and easy access complaints procedure, accessible on our website.
- The lessons learned process will ensure all complaints are recorded and responded to in line with the correct procedure.
- The biannual Tenant Feedback process works alongside the CEO and senior trustees at Board level to help shape future procedures and service improvements.
- Our volunteer team also provides valuable feedback through their involvement in coffee mornings, quizzes, arts and crafts, and monthly events. This feedback will help inform our ongoing strategy for service improvement.
- Residents are also supported through their Resident Support Groups and Sheltered House Meetings, which provide regular opportunities to meet with senior management and share feedback on both individual and collective issues.
- SORL provides regular feedback on concerns as they are collected, with updates shared through the residents' open meetings, resident/tenant led meetings with senior SORL staff, resident/tenant question register and individual Sheltered House meeting minutes displayed on the relevant notice boards.

5. Positive Complaint Handling Culture

SORL Board Members are committed to developing a positive complaints-handling culture across the organisation and recognise the value of complaints as an important source of learning, service improvement and increased tenant satisfaction. To support this approach, the following actions have already been completed:

- The Complaints Procedure has been improved and aligned with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.
- A clear process is in place to ensure complaints are managed consistently and in accordance with the correct complaints procedure.
- The CEO is the Complaints Officer, with oversight of all complaints.
- A Board Member has been appointed as the Member Responsible for Complaints.



- SORL recognises the importance of continually improving its complaints service and ensuring that staff training remains current, relevant and effective throughout the year.
- Our website links have been added to improve signposting and provide clearer access to the Complaints Procedure.
- Complaints guidance is available for both staff and residents, including links to template forms and letters, to support consistent management and provide clear guidance for the Executive Leadership Team in maintaining compliance with the Code.
- Website links have been reviewed and updated to ensure they align with the Code.

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

- Develop and issue an annual complaint satisfaction survey to complainants following each complaint.
- Continue to update the website to improve accessibility and transparency, in line with the Complaints Procedure.
- Continue the biannual TSM tenant perception survey and include a clear link to the Complaints Procedure on the website.
- Provide staff training across the organisation on how to recognise, record and respond to complaints effectively.

6. Comments from the Member Responsible for Complaints and Board

The Member Responsible for Complaints found the self-assessment clear and easy to follow. However, the low number of complaints from the Sheltered Housing units during the reporting period suggests that SORL should continue to improve the visibility and accessibility of the complaints pathway. The following actions are therefore recommended:

- Continue to review the location and availability of complaint forms, improve access to website links, and maintain regular staff training.
- Recognise that residents and tenants may appear satisfied while still having concerns that have not yet been raised and continue staff training to support earlier identification of issues and complaints.
- Continue to review how concerns and complaints are identified, ensuring that both are treated seriously and managed in line with the complaints procedure.
- Continue the restructuring of SORL's administrative files to improve transparency and give staff easier access to key policies and procedures, particularly the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Use clear communication and accurate recording of resident and tenant feedback to support the resolution of concerns and help prevent complaints from arising.



Your Complaint

Please fill in this form and provide it to our Senior House Manager or Community Manager at:

Southern Oaks Nonsuch, 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:	

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