

grainger trust

Meeting:	Board Meeting
Date:	20 May 2025
Agenda Item:	12a
Submitted By:	Heather Rigg
Board Action	Discussion and Response

SUBJECT:

Annual Complaints Performance & Learning Report April 2024 to March 2025

Appendix One – Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code Self Assessment

LINK TO BUSINESS PLAN/CORPORATE STRATEGY:

To deliver a quality product and value for money service for our customers to support those facing housing affordability challenge

Creating Social Value for GT and wider GPLC group

RECOMMENDATION:

This paper is presented to the Board as a review of the GT complaints performance and it is asked that Board review the paper, provide commentary and feedback and approval the paper for publication to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code requirements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of paper:

The purpose of this paper is to provide GT Board with oversight into complaints management and performance by GT over the period April 2024 until March 2025, to provide volumes of complaints received and provide assurance that they were responded to within the time frames expected within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

The report looks at the theme of complaints received learnings and improvement actions implemented or being undertaken.

Finally, the report provides insight into compensatory payments made during the course of the year.

The Board is requested to review the report consider the learning outcomes and improvements and provide their response which will be published alongside this report.

Appendix 1 Copy of annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Conduct which will also be published

Regulatory Assurance:

To ensure compliance with Transparency, Accountability and Influence Standard
To ensure compliance with requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code

VFM: Consideration of benefit derived to optimise economy, efficiency, and effectiveness

Customer Complaints are a key channel for customer feedback, learnings and enable the business to review and improve service delivery and customer experience.

RISKS associated

Risk	Brief description of material risks	Probability L/M/H
Strategic	Failure to deliver key strategic driver of provision of value for money service for our customers	M
Financial	Where service failures go wrong there is a risk that there could be maladministration, disrepair or compensation	M
Development	Minimal impact	L
Operational	Resource capacity focused on dealing with poor service or resolving complaints	M
Reputational	Impact of poor service or published judgments impact GT and GPLC reputation	M
Mitigation	Every complaint is managed through a formal process, each are reviewed to ensure that key learnings are highlighted and improvements mitigate working with key stakeholders to ensure that there is always a continuous improvement focus	

Stakeholder Impact	Y/N	Short Description
Grainger plc	Y	Failure to meet the strategic drivers
Residents	Y	Poor service delivery
Colleague	Y	Impact on Morale
Regulator	Y	Failure to meet requirements of consumer standards

ESG Impact	Y/N	Short Description
Environmental	N	
Social (including EDI)		
- Colleague	Y	Fair equitable service delivery
- Residents	Y	Fair equitable service delivery
Governance	Y	To ensure meeting requirements of intragroup agreement, regulatory and legislative requirements outlined to provide GT Board assurance

Introduction

To ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code Grainger Trust provides an annual complaints performance and service improvement report to update GT Board and residents. This report will be published on the GT website and on the Grainger App to ensure customers have oversight of performance and hard copies will be made available to share with anyone who requests.

This report will include:

- An annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with the codes requirements. (Appendix 1)
- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of GT complaint handling performance. This will also include a summary of the types of complaints GT has refused to accept
- Any findings of non-compliance by GT with this Code by the Ombudsman
- The service improvements made by GT because of the learning from complaints
- Any annual report about GT performance from the Ombudsman
- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of GT

This GT Board will review this report and provide a response which will also be published.

Analysis of GT Complaint Handling and Performance

The GT complaints policy changed in April 2024 to reflect the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code which required RP landlords to have a 2 stage process that was easily accessible for tenants

In the year April 2024 to March 2025 there were

Complaint Stage	Number of Complaints
Stage 1	40
Stage 2	5

This is an increase of 21 complaints from the previous year when 20 stage 1 complaints were received of which 6 were escalated to stage 2. This was anticipated in the previous report due to the changes in the recording of complaints, but also as GT grown in size complaints are to be expected but also there has been a concerted effort within the team to ensure customers can use the complaints policy and raise dissatisfaction complaints so that the feedback can be formally captured, analysed and learnings implemented.

The complaints handling code expects landlords to acknowledge and formally respond to all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within specific time lines. All complaints should be acknowledged within 5 working days whether is an initial stage 1 or an escalated stage 2. Stage 1 complaints should be responded to formally within 10 working days, and Stage 2 complaints should be responded to formally within 20 working days.

Where there is the need request an extension to a complaint, the customer should be informed, and the timelines cannot exceed a further 10 working days for stage 1 and 20 working days for stage 2.

Complaint Stage	Target	Acknowledgement	Target	Response
Stage 1	5 working days	100%	10 working days	95%
Stage 2	5 working days	100%	20 working days	100%

There were 2 complaints which slipped the timeframes by 1 and 2 days respectively. This was down to human error that these timeframes were missed. Expectations and the CHC requirements have been refreshed across the team and further ongoing training will reinforce the need to meet the timeframes.

The average time take to respond to a stage 1 complaint was 4 working days and was 12 working days for a stage 2 complaint.

There were no extensions of time for complaints for the period.

There were no complaints that were refused in the period.

There were no findings of non-compliance against the code by the Housing Ombudsman, Grainger Trust did not feature in the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Report and there were no reports or publications undertake by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to Grainger Trust.

There was proactive engagement, with requests for information from the Housing Ombudsman on 1 address in September and October 2024 with no further contact received.

Complaints Analysis and Learnings

In the period there were 40 complaints raised at stage 1 and of these 5 then escalated on to a stage 2.

Complaint Theme	Volume
Time Taken to Repair	19
Customer Service	4
Defects Liability	1
Use of Utilities	2
Handling of ASB	2
Heating/Hot Water Repairs	2
Neighbour Issue	2
Pet Behaviour	1
Request for Service	3
Service Charge	1
Substance Misuse	3
Total	40

Time Taken to Repair

The time taken repair category is associated with the volume of repairs linked to the repairs and maintenance contract. It is noted that contract only went live in May 2024 and there has been a bedding in period. This volume of complaints aligns with the TSM data and touchpoint survey data also.

The main issue with the complaints that were raised were associated with scheduling and access to properties. Residents reported that often repair jobs were raised and dates to complete works were scheduled only for messages to be sent to rebook works for a new date. Other issues raised included operatives being unable to complete works or lacking the time to complete works fully.

Actions taken to date to support service improvement include:

- Increased resourcing for the GT regions of the contract as the contractor better understands the profile of repairs works and properties after 12 months. Axis have already increased locally resourced operatives and supervisory staff to address this.
 - Greater understanding of the GT repairs data and profile has supported the contractor in appropriately resourcing the correct skill set and trades.
 - Increased supply chain and sub-contractor network for specialist works such as roofing, drainage or scaffolding for example. These are also geographically focused
 - Joint working groups with Axis and Grainger have been set up to focus on key areas such as no access.
 - Defined escalation and key points of contact to support good communication.
 - Development of the My Grainger App has now increased functionality to provide clearer descriptors of the repairs required and has capacity to allow customers to include photographs and video clips to support their service request.
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- Future delivery will look at engagement with GT residents to understand the customer journey and understand where the process is failing to develop further improvements

Management of Anti-Social Behaviour

The management of ASB and associated neighbourhood disputes has led to a larger number of complaints. ASB is difficult to manage as from a landlord perspective we are limited in our direct actions, where we do process with interventions often requiring joint stakeholder engagement or where legal proceedings are progressed this process is reliant on courts which are extremely backlogged and can take time for cases to be heard

Actions taken to date to support service improvement include:

- The GT ASB policy was updated to clearly define the difference between neighbour disputes and ASB. This been used as a blueprint for the GPLC policy so there is consistency in delivery for the operational teams delivering tenure blind services.
- A CCTV policy has been produced as complaints from the handling of ASB highlighted a lack of clarity for both customers and staff to support decision making in relation to home use CCTV or recording doorbells.
- There is a lack of clarity with the teams over a dissatisfaction, a request for service and ASB/neighbourhood disputes. This has been addressed by aligning Gplc complaints process to GT, further refresher training has been scheduled for May 2025 which will reinforce differences between the areas and how they should be logged
- Longer term a more granular ASB case management file is being developed to ensure that matters can be categorised and responded to appropriately

Heating and Hot Water Issue/Use of Utilities

Over the winter period especially there will be a run-in boiler breakdown and this has been reflected in complaints received. Delays with part lead times especially for older boilers can prolong the repair and lead to dissatisfaction. The boilers in the GT housing stock are combination boilers which results in both heating and hot water being impacted.

There were 2 complaints also received linked to over usage of water and increased water bills from the utility supplier. The complaints were similar in nature linked to a toilet cistern continuously flushing and a repair failing. The GT team worked with the residents to ensure that they were reimbursed.

Actions taken to date to support service improvement include:

- An updated and refreshed compensation policy has been produced which gives clarity to staff in relation to making compensatory offers and provides a clear framework.
- Liaison with the contractor to ensure that temporary heating is available to be left with customers where heating has failed and to ensure that these breakdowns are prioritised

Other Improvements

An update and review of the GT Complaints Policy took place and was approved by GT Board in December 202. This focused on ensuring that complaints management for complaints received about Axis are investigated by a GT lead for oversight and compliance with complaints handling code.

Further to the first phase of an updated complaints management system was introduced following the findings of PWC internal audit which highlighted the need to report on Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.

A second phase of this complaints manage system is being build on MRI Evolution which will focus on:

- Parent and child category codes for root cause analysis
- Introduction of automated acknowledgement emails to customers including copy of the complaint policy
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 template responses which are fully amendable to personalise depending on the individual complaint
- Where complaint remedies are associated with a service request this can be raised and linked to the complaint
- Fully reportable and time stamped recording of complaint managements to ensure adherence to the Complaints Handling Code

The system is now in build production with anticipated User Acceptance Testing and subsequent go live anticipated for the end of Q3 early Q4 of FY 25.

Compensation Paid

Over the period a sum of £906 .02 has been paid in compensation and good will gestures. These were paid in line with the updated compensation policy.

In general compensation was paid where there was a loss of service such as gas or water or where repairs failed to meet required timelines and customers were not able to have full use and enjoyment of their homes

Response from Member Responsible for Complaints following presentation to Grainger Trust Board on 20 May 2025:

At the 20 May 2025 GT Board meeting the Board reviewed the full 24/25 Complaints Learning Report which will now be published on our website.

At the same meeting the Board received a presentation of the full set of Tenant Satisfaction measures which provided a background on satisfaction across a range of services areas including complaints handling.

Grainger Trust is fully compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code.

The Board noted an increase in complaint levels in 2024/25 which is in part due to our new complaints policy which was adopted in year and also the change in maintenance provider. The Board welcomes the improved reporting which allows greater clarity on complaints and provides opportunities to improve service delivery.

The new Maintenance contract went live in May 2024, and the Board remains committed to ensuring that it receives regular reports on the performance of this contract as the learnings are captured and improvements implemented.

ASB is another service areas where improvements have been made to policy and procedures as a result of resident feedback.

The Board received and approved the improvement plan as set out in the Complaints Learning report.

The Board continues to receive reports on a quarterly basis on all complaints and learning opportunities. The Tenant Satisfaction measures align with the information provided on complaints and the Board welcomed the proposal for increased resident engagement in 2025/26 which will further aid in the improvement of service delivery.

Di Hart, Member Responsible for Complaints and Non-Executive Director
