

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2023/2024



F FOUNDATION

Inspiring independence. Transforming lives.

1 Foreword



An introduction from Ruth Kettle,
CEO at Inspire North (parent
company of Foundation)

I'm delighted to introduce our very first Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the financial year 2023/24. This report represents an important step in our journey towards greater transparency and accountability.

Recognising the significance of reviewing and acting on complaints is pivotal to our commitment to continuous improvement. Complaints provide us with valuable insights into areas where we can enhance our services, ensuring that we meet and exceed the expectations of our clients and tenants. Therefore, this report underscores our dedication to listening attentively, learning, and evolving to better serve our community.

As outlined in our new Inclusive Business and Growth Strategy 2024 - 2029, the enabler of 'Effective Use of Data' empowers us to leverage our data and client and tenant feedback to drive service improvement and enhance quality. Moreover, our ongoing initiatives to enhance service delivery and uphold Decent Home Standards remain a top priority, driven through the 'Finance' enabler where we have committed to applying the decent home standards to all of our properties. We therefore acknowledge the importance of providing homes that are not only safe and comfortable but also meet the highest standards of quality.

I extend my appreciation to our dedicated team for their diligent efforts and commitment to addressing complaints promptly and striving for service excellence. It is through their hard work and dedication that we can fulfil our promise of delivering exceptional housing services.

As we embark on this journey of continuous improvement, I invite all stakeholders to join us in shaping a brighter future for our community. Let us use the insights gained from this report to drive positive change and reaffirm our commitment to excellence in everything we do.

Together, we will continue to make meaningful progress towards our shared goals.

Warm regards,

Ruth Kettle
CEO, Inspire North (parent company of Foundation)

2 Meet Our Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)



A welcome from Dave Roche,
Independent Trustee of
Foundation, Housing Champion
and MRC

As an Independent Trustee and Housing Champion for Foundation, I am pleased to introduce the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the financial year 2023/24. This report serves as a comprehensive reflection on the complaints received by our housing services and represents a critical aspect of our commitment to transparency and accountability.

Having worked closely with regional specialist housing support providers in West Yorkshire who deliver services for vulnerable adults with learning disabilities, I understand the importance of robust complaints handling processes in ensuring the delivery of high-quality services.

In my role as MRC, I recognise the significance of scrutinising our performance in complaints management as regulated by the Housing Ombudsman. This report offers insights into our efforts to address complaints effectively and to continuously improve our services based on the feedback received.

Additionally, I, on behalf of fellow Trustees, am actively engaged in the Tenant Voice group. This involvement not only allows us to interact directly with tenants but also grants board-level involvement, ensuring that tenant voices are heard at the highest level of decision-making. By actively listening to feedback and collaborating with tenants, we are able to advocate for their needs and concerns, ultimately contributing to the development of policies and practices that drive positive change within our housing services.

I am confident that this report will provide valuable insights into our performance and guide our ongoing efforts to enhance the experiences of those we serve. Together, let us continue to strive for excellence in all aspects of our work.

Dave Roche
Independent Trustee of Foundation, Housing Champion and MRC

3 About us

Foundation is part of the Inspire North Group, alongside Community Links, two charities leading the way in mental health and housing support across the north of England.



Foundation is a Registered Social Landlord and has been dedicated to enhancing lives in the north of England for more than four decades. Our ethos revolves around social justice, fairness, and the fundamental right to belong.

We support adults, young individuals, and families, building their strengths to foster a sustainable difference in their lives, empowering change, and social inclusion.

In collaboration with our partners, we provide a diverse range of pioneering and expert services tailored to individuals experiencing homelessness or facing the risk of homelessness.

Whether individuals are experiencing complex needs, have a history of offending, family breakdown, domestic violence, addiction, or mental health challenges, we are committed to offering support and guidance every step of the way.



4 Introduction



Our clients' and tenants' opinions truly matter to us as well as those of individuals who interact with our organisation. If we've made a mistake, we're committed to making it right.

Conversely, when we deliver exceptional customer service, we want to acknowledge and celebrate that achievement. Through this process, we continuously learn and strive for improvement.

We endeavour to address concerns and complaints promptly, efficiently, and with a standardised approach, that is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints Handling Codes (Codes), which were updated on 1st April 2024.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of all complaints that have been specifically received by Foundation's housing services during 2023/24, falling under the Housing Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

It considers the nature of these complaints and outlines the proactive steps taken by our organisation to address these issues and implement meaningful improvements.

Through a thorough analysis of each complaint and its underlying causes, we have identified opportunities for enhancement across our service delivery and within our properties. By transparently documenting both the complaints and the subsequent improvements made, we aim to foster accountability and trust within our community.

Prioritising Quality: Ensuring Decent Homes for Every Resident

Our commitment to continually refining and optimising our housing services remains unwavering, driven by a dedication to not only providing the highest standard of care and support to our residents but also ensuring that they have access to decent, safe, and comfortable homes.

We understand the pivotal role that quality housing plays in fostering well-being and stability, and thus, we prioritise the maintenance and improvement of our owned residential properties and those where we act as the landlord, to uphold this fundamental aspect of dignified and independent living.



5 Self-assessment

Foundation have conducted an annual self-assessment against the Code to verify that our complaint handling policy aligns with its stipulations. Previously, the self-assessment was reviewed and updated in October 2023 as part of our annual review process, in accordance with the previous Code. Subsequently, it was revisited and amended to align with the new Code, which took effect on 1st April 2024.



We are pleased to confirm that we are fully compliant with the Code and will continue to review and refine our practices in line with our commitment to continuous improvement and regulatory compliance.

This is because at Foundation we firmly believe that there is always room for improvement, and we are dedicated to doing better. Our plans for further improvement are outlined under the 'Service Improvement and Learnings' section, where we aim to build a more robust co-productive approach with our Tenant Voice Panel to collaboratively review learnings from complaints.

Additionally, we are currently testing compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's revised Consumer and Economic Standards, which encompass a comprehensive framework designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive within the housing sector.

These standards, effective from 1st April 2024, outline guidelines for transparency, accountability, and affordability across various aspects of service delivery and economic viability.

Despite not being subject to a formal In-depth Assessment as a provider with under 1000 units, we believe in adopting best practices to ensure the best outcomes and positive experiences for our clients and tenants. A copy of our self-assessment is available on our website.

Findings of Non-Compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman

We are also pleased to confirm that there were no instances of non-compliance with the Code identified by the Ombudsman, reflecting our commitment to maintaining high standards and adhering to regulatory requirements. This positive outcome underscores our dedication to excellence and ongoing efforts to improve our services for the benefit of our clients, residents and stakeholders.



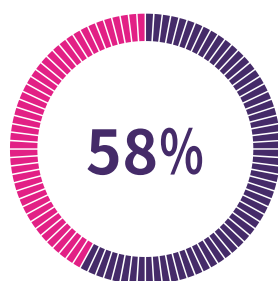
6 Analysis of Complaint Handling Performance

While we always strive for excellence in our services, we acknowledge that there are instances where we may fall short of expectations. Despite our best efforts, we understand that occasional mistakes can occur. We believe in transparency and accountability, recognising that addressing complaints is an essential part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

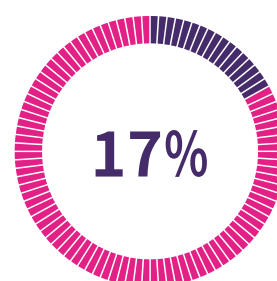
During the financial year 2023/24, Foundation received a total of 30 complaints. Among these, 40% were related to complaints from, on behalf of, or in relation to tenants where Foundation serves as the owning landlord. Below is a breakdown of our complaints and our performance in handling such complaints in the period:



Complaints received



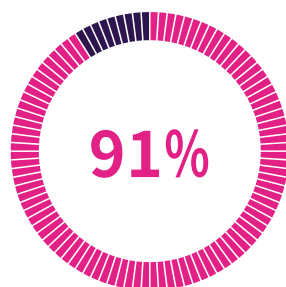
Complaints up-held or partly up-held



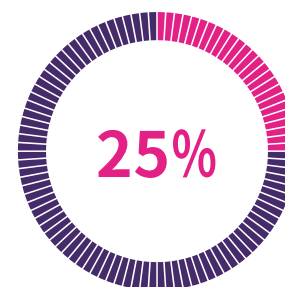
Complaints not up-held



Complaints unactionable due to anonymity



Acknowledged in 5 working days



Responded to (completed) in 10 working days

Out of the complaints received, only one was not acknowledged within our policy timeframes, taking 9 days to acknowledge. Whilst the complaint related to a tenant where Foundation was the owning landlord, the complaint was actually related to the support services provided rather than any property-related issues. As the service manager was part of the complaint, a manager from another service had to be allocated as the investigating officer.

Out of the 75% of complaints that were not responded to (completed) within policy timeframes, 42% did not directly relate to property issues. These complaints often involved broader issues encompassing our support services rather than physical property concerns. The remaining complaints involved more intricate issues such as complex repairs, damp, and mould and continued anti-social behaviour, which necessitated more thorough investigation due to their complexity.

7 Service Improvement and Learning

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past financial year, we would like to present an overview of Foundation's and the Inspire North Group's ongoing efforts to provide quality housing and service delivery, while prioritising client and resident satisfaction.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to continuous improvement and client and resident-centric service delivery.



Tenant Voice Panel: Empowering Residents Through Dialogue and Collaboration

During 2023/24, we re-established the Client and Tenant Voice Panels, aimed at amplifying the voices of our clients and tenants and facilitating robust two-way communication, consultation, and co-production. This initiative serves as a vital platform for fostering meaningful dialogue, enabling our clients and tenants to actively participate in decision-making processes that directly affect their living conditions, support they receive and overall satisfaction.

By engaging our clients and tenants in this collaborative manner, we seek to cultivate a culture of transparency, responsiveness, and mutual respect, ultimately enhancing the quality of our services and strengthening our relationship with those we support.

Addressing Damp and Mould Concerns: Proactive Measures for Tenant Well-being

Damp and mould issues have emerged as a growing concern, with the 2023/24 period witnessing a total of 7 complaints related to this issue across all Foundation services and 4 cases where Foundation is the owning landlord. In response, we initiated an audit in July 2023, led by external auditors, to assess our approach to damp and mould management. This audit included a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on damp and mould.

Subsequently, we have adopted a zero-tolerance stance towards damp and mould interventions. Moreover, we have enhanced our internal case management system to more efficiently record, report, and monitor instances of damp and mould, with the aim of preventing them from escalating into formal complaints.

Furthermore, a dedicated training programme on damp and mould has been developed for frontline employees. This training initiative has commenced, with the first cohort of 15 attendees held in February 2024. Through these proactive measures, we are committed to addressing damp and mould concerns comprehensively, ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of our tenants.



Enhancing Responsiveness and Oversight in Repair Services

During the reporting period, we received a total of 6 complaints across all Foundation services (only 2 where Foundation are the landlord) pertaining to repairs on properties and concerns regarding the responsiveness of our repair services, as well as instances where properties did not meet the expected standard. As an organisation, our commitment lies in ensuring that all properties meet the Decent Home Standard, and to this end, we conduct regular Decent Home Standard surveys.

To uphold our standards, we measure ourselves against key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess our responsiveness in handling repair requests, categorised into 1-day, 7-day, and 28-day repairs. These KPIs are rigorously monitored and shared with our Senior Leadership Team and Trustees on a quarterly basis.

This transparent reporting mechanism ensures that our Senior Leaders and Trustees are informed of our performance and can provide oversight to ensure continuous improvement in our repair services and property standards.

In support of our goal for continuous improvement, we have engaged external auditors to conduct an audit specifically focused on the responsiveness of our repair services. Scheduled for August 2024, this audit will encompass an assessment of various aspects, including the efficacy of our internal Housing Governance Group and data mining practices related to repairs data.

Additionally, the audit will assess our compliance with the Safety and Quality standard set forth by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). By subjecting our repair processes to external scrutiny and aligning with regulatory standards, we aim to further enhance the quality and efficiency of our repair services, ultimately fostering greater satisfaction among our residents and stakeholders.



Streamlining Complaints Handling: Preparing for Regulatory Changes and Improving Accessibility

Overall, we have been diligently enhancing our complaints handling process in anticipation of the launch of the new Code, which came into effect on April 1st, 2024. These improvements include a comprehensive review and subsequent relaunch of our policy, aimed at making it not only fully compliant with the Code, but also more transparent, accessible, and reader friendly.

Additionally, we have revamped our employee training manuals and intranet pages to provide our employees with enhanced guidance on effectively managing complaints.

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