



## **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2023-2024**

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This annual report sets out the complaints that Cossington Housing Co-op has received between April 2023 and March 2024 and what actions we have taken in response to them.

To find out more about what our tenant members should expect from the co-op when you make a complaints, please go to <https://cossingtoncoop.org.uk/complaints/>

### **Response from the management committee**

Cossington Housing Co-op's management committee has considered this report at a special committee meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024. The committee also considered the co-op's self-assessment regarding compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

The management committee approves both this report and the self-assessment. It is noted that the co-op needs to develop policies to manage unacceptable behaviour from members, and that the co-op needs to do further work to identify complaints that may require further investigation. The latter is the only area where the co-op is not fully in compliance with the Code. This is due to the low numbers of complaints we receive not giving us sufficient information to know which complaints will take longer to investigate. The committee will ensure further work is done in this area to address this requirement in the next year.

Cossington Housing Co-op is a small Registered Provider landlord. The volume of complaints from our members is very low. Nonetheless, we are pleased that the three complaints we received in 2023/2024 (one of which was not a service complaint) have led to learning and actions for the co-op – reviewing our

safeguarding and lone working procedures to protect tenants and staff; ensuring that we are more proactive in providing information to members about our succession policies; sharing information with tenant members about the use of CCTV in communal areas; and reviewing our data protection policy to include reference to CCTV in communal areas.

The committee welcomes that we met our target timescales in respect of the complaints considered this year.

We aim to continue both our proactive learning approach as well as our intention to respond to complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code.

## Our approach to complaints

Cossington Housing Co-op aims to provide the best service it can to our tenant members. We encourage our members to tell us if there is a problem with something we have done. We consider complaints and comments to be valuable feedback. It gives us a chance to learn and improve services.

Our general approach incorporates the following features:

- a two stage complaints process in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code
- an approach where we welcome and value complaints
- seeing complaints as an opportunity to put things right where we have not got things right
- learning from complaints
- providing simple information about how to make complaints on our website and through other methods
- complaints are reviewed by our Chief Officer and our Chair (the Member Responsible for Complaints) who consider opportunities to learn from complaints

- we will seek to continually improve how we manage complaints

## Our complaint stages

We aim to find a resolution to dissatisfaction at the first point of contact. Where this is not possible, the complaint progresses as follows:

### **Stage One – investigating the complaint (target 10 working days)**

An investigation of the complaint takes place, including interviews with the complainant and other relevant parties, and a formal written communication to the complainant regarding the outcomes of the investigation within 10 working days.

### **Stage Two – independent review (target 20 working days)**

If the complainant is not happy with some or all the outcome of their complaint, they may request a review. The co-op will form an independent review panel consisting of two people and both of whom will be independent of the complaint and the previous investigation.

The Review Panel will offer a final written response seeking to resolve the problem within 20 working days of a review request being received.

If the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome, they may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## Cossington Housing Co-op complaints and how we responded

We received three complaints between April 2023 and March 2024. Only one complaint was escalated to Stage 2 of the procedure.

- One complaint was that Cossington Housing Co-op's Chief Officer entered a tenant member's home without consent. This complaint was investigated, but it was not upheld. The complainant was advised that they could escalate the complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure and that they could

contact the Housing Ombudsman, but the complainant declined to take further action.

- One complaint was from the daughter of a deceased tenant who did not have succession rights to the home who complained that her case was not dealt with in an empathetic way and without a sense of care, and then subsequently a complaint was made that the case was not dealt with in accordance with data protection regulations. Neither complaint was upheld, and the complainant requested a review. The review was heard by an independent panel and neither complaint was upheld.
- One complaint was a neighbour dispute relating to issues about CCTV in communal areas and privacy. This was not a service complaint, but the co-op took action to inform members about the use of CCTV in communal areas.

Stage one of the second complaint was not carried out within target time. The target time was extended by 3 weeks due to the complexity of the issues involved and the complainant was informed of the reasons why the target time was extended. Other than that, all complaints were responded to within target time.

Our learning from these complaints was as follows:

- we have reviewed our safeguarding and lone working procedures – where we have identified vulnerable or challenging tenant members, we now ensure that we always attend with two people to safeguard both the tenant member and the member of staff
- our staff are now more proactive in explaining succession rights to our tenant members
- the second case reinforced the need for us to know more about the people living in our homes and their housing needs. This will become part of our tenant audit process for 2025-2026.

- we have shared information with tenant members about the use of CCTV in communal areas
- we have updated our data protection policy to ensure that the use of CCTV in communal areas is properly covered.

## Our plans to improve complaints handling

The co-op will action the following points in the next year to improve complaints handling:

- we will continue to publicise our complaints procedure to our tenant members, ensuring that all members know that we welcome complaints
- we will continue to embed a positive culture around complaints amongst staff and committee members
- we will analyse satisfaction with our complaints handling with our members
- we will continue to track complaints through to completion to ensure we are achieving timescale targets
- we will ensure that staff involved in complaints handling take an approach where they identify how our policies, procedures and systems could be improved as a result of complaints
- we will develop policies and procedures to manage unacceptable behaviour from our members
- we will analyse complaints we receive in order to develop a matrix of complaints that may take longer to investigate.

## The Housing Ombudsman and our self-assessment

Each year, we publish a self-assessment of how we perform against criteria for complaints handling set out by the Housing Ombudsman. To view our 2024 self-assessment, please [click here](#).

It has been particularly identified in the self-assessment that:

- a) the co-op needs to develop policies and procedures to manage unacceptable behaviour from members (in such a way that it does not unnecessarily restrict access to the complaints policy).
- b) there is a need to identify particular types of complaints that may take longer to investigate. The low number of complaints has made this difficult, but the co-op will seek to address this during 2024/2025.

No complaints cases have been referred to the Ombudsman during April 2023-March 2024 and the Ombudsman has published no reports in this period regarding Cossington Housing Co-op's performance.