

# Plus Dane Housing

**Action plan in response to the  
Scrutiny Panel review of the  
effectiveness of our complaints  
process**

## Introduction

The team would like to express our thanks to the members of the Panel for their commitment and hard work in producing such a considered report.

Our response to the recommendations takes into account the rationale of the Panel, the evidence for their findings and the desire to provide an excellent experience for those customers who make a complaint.

As well as responding to the recommendations in the report, the team are keen to work further with the Panel to understand where else we can learn from their experience of carrying out the review. In particular, we would be keen to learn from their experience when contacting those with closed complaints as this is something in particular where we really want to improve our performance.

In addition, we would like to extend our thanks to one of the Panel members who has agreed to engage with our project to renew the Plus Dane website and draw on her knowledge and insight gained as part of the research for the review.

Whilst it is sometimes disappointing to learn that the experience of our customers is not as positive as we strive to deliver, understanding what doesn't work well is invaluable to enable us to improve how we do things for the benefit of customers. On this basis we are grateful of the insight working with the Panel brings to our work.

We agree with the Panel's desire for Plus Dane to exceed any minimum requirements set out by the Housing Ombudsman or the Regulator of Social Housing and we will work to meet this ambition.

Due to the cross cutting nature of complaints, many of the recommendations will be led by CRT but will require the input and cooperation of colleagues from a number of teams. Those teams are identified in the action plan. The actions and timescales will reflect this although ownership for reporting against the recommendations will remain with the CRT.

Following our discussion with the Panel about the action plan we have provided some comments below with the actions in pink. The pink actions will form the tracker in the future.



		<p>been published on our website and is produced every year as part of our compliance with the code.</p> <p>We will explore enhancing the information about complaints in our annual report. This will be posted via social media. This will include highlighting lessons learnt and transparency about the customer experience.</p> <p>For the app see 2.5 below.</p>	2021	Communications/IT
How easy is it for customers to make a complaint?				
2.1	To identify a member of staff from the relevant service to be the key contact throughout the entire complaint and give the customer reasonable access to them by providing their work contact details.	<p>We understand that at stage 0 the customer may not know that the contact from Plus Dane was explicitly as part of their complaint but could have been a member of staff phoning them about their issue.</p> <p>Now at both stages of the complaint process a written acknowledgment is sent giving the name of the complaint handler in all cases. This letter also contains the direct contact details of a member of CRT.</p> <p>Each complaint has an owner – this is</p>	Complete	

		sent in writing in every instance as part of the stage 1 and stage 2 acknowledgment.		
2.2	To investigate the possibility of setting up a complaints handling hotline for customers. This would provide more support to those tenants who require it the most.	<p>We have given some thought to how this could work in a practical sense. Neither CRT or CAT have the capacity to have a dedicated line, nor are the volume of complaints able to justify this. To explore how effective the hotline is for the organisation highlighted in the Panel's report we contacted the Leeds City Council complaint hotline to discuss the benefits with them. In practice this hotline directs the caller to the main Council contact centre which suggests that even at the greater scale that the Council has, this is difficult to deliver. We think that the most important element of this is to ensure that whenever a customer wishes to make or discuss a complaint that they have easy access to well trained and informed staff.</p> <p>Explore ways that both CAT and CRT can improve the experience of complainants phoning our contact centre when considered with the response to 2.1 above.</p>	March 2021	
2.3	To investigate the points in the process customers would like to	Our current process has a phone call at the beginning and end so need to		Investigating Managers

	have more regular contact and what information they would like to receive.	<p>monitor that this is taking place and then understand what additional contact will increase satisfaction and improve the experience for the customer.</p> <p>Explore appropriate contact points to ensure that the customer feels informed through the process and reflect this in the updated procedure.</p>	September 2021	
2.4	To create an easy to follow flow chart of the complaints process as a useful tool for customers which can be uploaded on your website.	<p>Produce flow chart that shows how a complaint is dealt with including timescales and upload on website.</p> <p>We have begun to produce this and will share with the Panel once the draft is complete.</p>	April 2021	
2.5	To add a dedicated button on the landing page of the app for those customers who would like to use this channel to comment, criticise or complain.	<p>This is not a dedicated PD app and the development is not entirely in our gift. We have contacted the developer who has committed to include a further button on the app that will link through to the complaint form on the website.</p> <p>We are reviewing the app as part of the introduction of our tenant portal and website and will ensure that there is an easy to use way for customers to make a complaint in the future.</p>	<p>May 2021</p> <p>December 2021</p>	<p>Looking Local</p> <p>IT/Communications</p>
2.6	To train staff in how to carry out full investigations at the first point of contact with the complainant.	Implement a full programme of training at 3 levels:	September 2021	People

		<p>Annual mandatory training through e-learning for all staff to demonstrate understanding and knowledge of customer service requirements and the complaints policy and process.</p> <p>Additional customer service and complaint handling training for all customer facing staff, including how to log a complaint and deal with customer feedback. How this will be rolled out and the frequency will be developed with The People Team.</p> <p>Regular in-depth training and coaching for all investigating officers (completed by CRT) to ensure consistent and high-quality complaint handling and resolution. This will also include comprehensive training on complaint investigations.</p>	September 2021	
2.7	To review and update the complaint pages of the website and improve how customers navigate to the complaints page. The review should take place as soon as possible and the pages should be updated periodically by a member of the CRM team, providing updates and	<p>PD has just commenced a project to replace our website during 2021. A member of the Scrutiny Panel has agreed to be part of the project team.</p> <p>We will share the Panel's recommendations with the project team to be considered as part of the</p>	December 2021  March 2021	Communications

	<p>amendments, removing outdated content and dead links. Specifically we recommend that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the landing page (Homepage) less busy</li> <li>• Place 'Complaints' plainly and obviously on the landing page - perhaps in its own box</li> <li>• Provide useful documents such as compensation policy and annual complaints report</li> <li>• Update 'Complaints' area to be more: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ User friendly</li> <li>◦ Word friendly</li> <li>◦ Open</li> <li>◦ Honest</li> <li>◦ Accessible</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Point customer at information directly relevant to complaints (nothing else)</li> <li>• Make the Housing Ombudsman information more obvious and accessible with clear instructions</li> </ul>	<p>specification.</p> <p>Pages were refreshed in January 2021 as an interim response to initial feedback from the Panel and remain under review.</p> <p>We will revisit the “by-line” statement to address the concerns of the Panel that this is the wrong tone to mean that customers have confidence to make a complaint</p> <p>Live chat is available on the website between 9-5 and is operated by CAT. We had a period of disruption to webchat due to technical issues at the end of 2020 but this facility is now back up and running during office hours.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>April 2021</p> <p>Complete</p>	
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	<p>and working links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a dedicated 'online team' to answer questions directly from the website, in real time.</li> </ul>			
What is the customer's experience of reporting a complaint and seeking resolution?				
3.1	<p>Investigate the feasibility of setting up a Customer Complaints Panel which consists of staff and customers to help Plus Dane manage complaints. The role of the Panel could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the lessons learnt and highlight good practise and areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Oversee and monitor the implementation of service improvement to ensure Plus Dane does what it says it will.</li> <li>• Look at ways to publicise examples of</li> </ul>	<p>We will plan and trial a joint colleague/customer complaint group to meet quarterly and with terms of reference aimed to provide challenge and assurance to the complaints process.</p> <p>We will review this after six months to ensure that the format adds value to the complaints process and make the necessary changes to make a meaningful difference for customers and Plus Dane.</p> <p>To make sure that the Complaints Panel has a purpose we will suggest themes for discussion such as input to the annual report, review of our self assessment against the code, lessons learned, communication and customer</p>	May 2021	Leadership

	<p>complaints and changes to both tenant and staff including producing a customer friendly document to share on the website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at ways to encourage customers to make complaints</li> <li>• Review performance information about the service and ensure Plus Dane are meeting the requirements of the New Code.</li> </ul>	satisfaction, for example.		
3.2	To avoid customers not knowing when their complaint has come to an end PD should develop a more personal touch by speaking to customers in addition to sending formal letters. This is especially important at the end of the process.	<p>We think that customers not being aware that their complaint had been closed relates to the informal nature of the contact at stage 0. Now that the closure at stage 1 and 2 involves a phone call to the customer and a letter this should be more clear that the complaint has come to an end.</p> <p>As part of our review of the procedure guide we will consider customer feedback relating to the closure of the complaint.</p>	September 2021	
3.3	To be as upfront as possible at the beginning of a complaint so the	We will produce a simple pictorial one page guide to the process that will be	June 2021	Communications

	customer is clear about what they can expect and investigate ways to better get this message over to customers. We suggest the flow chart recommended in the previous section of the report could be helpful here.	shared with complainants at the time their complaint is acknowledged and we confirm who will be the main contact throughout.		
3.4	To better communicate the existing complaint standards to customers and staff so that they are consistently applied and customers know what to expect and what to do if these are not met.	See 3.3 above		
3.5	To have regular contact with the customer to ensure they understand the progress as the investigation progressed.	See 2.3 above		Investigating Managers
Is the complaints policy embedded in PD and is it understood by staff and residents?				
4.1	To use the existing toolkit for staff and the new requirements placed on Plus Dane by the Housing Ombudsman as a basis to deliver refresher training to all staff within the next 6 months. We suggest that	To ensure all staff are familiar with the toolkit and all available resources, CRT will run regular in-depth training and coaching for all investigating officers to ensure consistent and high-quality complaint handling and resolution.	September 2021	People

	<p>the training is tailored to the relevant roles staff have for reporting and dealing with a complaint.</p> <p>We suggest that all staff will require a basic understanding of the complaint process but that those who take complaints, and those who investigate and provide a resolution, will require more detailed training which should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the complaints process as a result of the new code</li> <li>• How to recognise a complaint, diffuse difficult situations and getting to the root of a problem</li> <li>• How to write a complaint response using good practice templates</li> <li>• How the functionality in CX works to deal with complaints and how to record lessons learned</li> </ul> <p>We suggest Plus Dane reviews the</p>	<p>This will also include comprehensive training on complaint investigations and feedback from The Housing Ombudsman.</p> <p>There will also be annual mandatory training for all staff and customer service training for all customer facing staff which will be developed with the People Team and CRT.</p> <p>The SHOES model will be revised and promoted to all departments</p> <p>Also See 2.6</p>	<p>September 2021</p>	
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	<p>success of SHOES – (Show empathy and understanding, How can I make it right, Own it, Empower staff, Success) and look at innovative ways to train staff about the complaints process by using videos and interactive sessions.</p>			
4.2	<p>To ensure that the complaints process is included in any induction programme for new staff and that new managers are supported in their role as Investigating Managers.</p>	<p>We will work with the People Team to ensure that complaint handling is part of staff induction. For a new member of staff who will be an investigating manager there will be additional training about their role supported by CRT.</p>	December 2021	People
4.3	<p>To re-introduce the Investigating Officers meeting to discuss issues, complaint trends, share good practice and explain how to record the lessons learned from complaints.</p>	<p>These were paused to reflect the impact on colleagues of covid.</p> <p>Alternative communication has been in place during the last 12 months including a daily email to all complaint handlers.</p> <p>These meetings will be reinstated to provide a forum for sharing best practice, key issues about learning and coaching around complaint handling.</p>	April 2021	
Does PD				

learn lessons from complaints?				
5.1	To develop a Lessons Learned Framework. This can then be shared with staff and on the 'Complaints' webpage, demonstrating active listening and engagement with customers.	<p>We will complete the development of the lessons learned framework and share through appropriate forums for customers and colleagues. The annual complaint report contains lessons learned, and Unity magazine contains a regular "You said, we did" feature. We will review this to make sure that lessons learned are more meaningful for customers and include case studies where they will help to demonstrate improvements.</p> <p>Lessons are recorded in Cx and we are actively working on a tool through Microsoft Teams to ensure that learning is visible to colleagues and can be replicated on the website for customers.</p>	May 2021	Communications  IT
5.2	To reinstate the Investigating Officers meetings and focus on sharing lessons learned, exchange ideas, offer support and identify trends so that the same mistakes do not repeatedly occur across service areas.	See 4.3 above		

5.3	To look at ways to encourage staff to identify, record and share how complaints have made a difference, e.g. better utilise team meetings and team training.	<p>Using the lessons learned framework we will produce case studies to share with colleagues.</p> <p>These case studies will be uploaded onto the website for customers.</p>	June 2021	
5.4	To consider adding questions to the end of process satisfaction surveys so that you can hear whether customers are satisfied not just with the outcome of the complaint but the process, to help Plus Dane better identify where improvements in the process can be made.	<p>We introduced our new satisfaction surveys in October and would like to give them at least six months to judge their effectiveness. Before using text messages to understand customer satisfaction we phoned every customer in person to discuss how they found the complaint process and whether they were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. We found that customers did not respond to this approach and we did not speak to the majority of complainants. This led us to try something new which is beginning to bed in.</p> <p>The white paper contains a proposal for standard customer satisfaction measures for all landlords which includes both satisfaction with complaint handling and the outcome of the complaint. We will implement these requirements in full once the detail is published.</p>	<p>May 2021</p> <p>tbc</p>	Business Effectiveness

		<p>The STAR survey is currently live and we have explored both of these questions as part of that. The outcome of the responses will be shared with the Panel once they are available.</p>	June 2021	
5.5	<p>To develop a new way to monitor that actions that were promised to customers as part of a complaint resolution actually happen and ensure that someone has oversight of this.</p>	<p>We deal with this in an informal way at the moment and agree with the Panel that a more systematic approach to ensuring that we follow through on commitments is required.</p> <p>We will introduce a way to track that commitments are delivered once the complaint is closed.</p>	October 2021	
5.6	<p>To look at what action was taken following on from the 2017 survey/review and investigate as to why the issues raised then are the same issues that the Panel has identified in this 2020 review.</p>	<p>At Plus Dane we believe that we have improved our complaint handling considerably since 2017 when the previous policy was introduced and the current team came into being. We accept that the Panel are not clear about what this looks like and would like an explanation of what has improved.</p> <p>We will review the responses to both the survey that was done for the policy renewal in 2017 and the finding of the Panel. We will consider the issues and ensure that responses are in place which will be shared with the Panel.</p>	April 2021	