

Consultation on our Business Plan 2024-25

March 2024

Using our values to deliver an independent, visible and proactive Ombudsman

What we do

Our role

- Make the final decision on disputes between residents and member landlords. Our decisions are independent, impartial and fair
- Support effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution by others, including landlords themselves, and promote positive change in the housing sector

Our service is free to the 4.9 million households eligible to use it.

Our role is set out in the Housing Act 1996 and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme approved by the Secretary of State.

Our membership

Membership of the Scheme is compulsory for social landlords - primarily housing associations who are or have been registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and local authority landlords. Additionally, some private landlords are voluntary members. The Scheme is funded by subscriptions from members paid on a per housing unit basis.

Membership as at 31 March 2023






Our vision, values and process

Our vision
Improving residents' lives and landlords' services through housing complaints

Our values

<p>► Fairness</p> <p>We are independent and impartial; we take time to listen carefully and to understand the evidence</p>	<p>► Learning</p> <p>We share knowledge and insights to maximise our impact and improve services</p>	<p>► Openness</p> <p>We are accessible and accountable; we publish information on our performance and decisions</p>	<p>► Excellence</p> <p>We work together to provide an efficient, high-quality service</p>
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Our process

	Dispute support	We support the resolution of complaints while they are within the landlord's complaints process
	Dispute resolution	We make the final decision on complaints that remain unresolved through independent, impartial and fair investigation
	Sharing learning	We use our knowledge and insight to improve housing services by sharing learning across the sector

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
How to respond	3
Foreword	4
Overview of our operating environment	6
Achievements in the year to date	7
Performance, impact and efficiency	8
Our plans for 2024-25	10
Key Performance Indicators and fee	14
Year two consultation on our Corporate Plan	17
Draft 2024-25 Business Plan	20

How to respond

This consultation seeks views from residents, landlords and their representative bodies on our planned strategic actions to improve local complaint handling and consequently reduce the on-going significant increases in demand for our service. The consultation is [available online](#) which is the preferred method of response. If you wish to respond by email, please send your feedback to communications@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. The consultation is open until 5pm on 5 April 2024. Thank you for participating.

For more information about our role and how we work see our website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Foreword

Social housing is vital for residents and wider society, and our work aims to help it to be a success.

Since April 2023, there has been a step-change in the pace of determinations, as we benefit from new resources recruited. This means we complete a formal investigation about every 20 minutes.

Three statistics have emerged about complaint handling in the first three quarters of the year which should shock the sector. These are: our levels of maladministration which we find in 72% of the cases we investigate (it was 59% in 2022-23), compensation which stands at £3.7m (compared to £1.1m in 2022-23) and we have had to put right more than 14,000 things following our investigations (compared to 6,500 remedies in the prior year).

There is a fourth statistic: casework volumes have increased by 91% so far this year, which reflects the volatile operating environment and continued exponential growth in complaints that started first after Grenfell Tower and then the tragic Awaab Ishak inquest.

It is evident that landlords are doing more to improve complaint handling and address the root causes for complaints. This is positive. It is also clear that some of the issues landlords are responding to require more funding in the system and reflect twin housing and cost of living crises.

Yet it is also clear that there is a long way to go before we achieve the universal standard in homes and services required to see a sustained fall in complaints presenting to the Ombudsman.

This year is pivotal with the commencement of much of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, including proactive consumer regulation and the legal duties to comply with the Complaint Handling Code. This business plan consultation reflects that. It sets out how we will develop our role in light of these system changes, including using our new powers; how we will continue to expand our casework activities, including timely, empathetic and high-quality investigations that offer a genuine alternative to the courts; and how we will expand our learning and systemic work to help improve landlords' services and culture. We recognise the financial pressures in the system, but while demand continues to increase exponentially, we will require more resource to meet this. There is also a small fee increase for delivering our new statutory responsibilities.

The consultation asks two fundamental questions. What more can we do to support the earlier resolution of complaints by landlords – to the benefit of the resident and landlord – through our range of tools and our Centre for Learning. And whether there is support for a future change to the fee regime, whereby those landlords who are driving a disproportionate volume of complaints, contribute more to the costs of resolving them, but without risking complaints being driven underground.

We look forward to your responses.

Richard Blakeway
Housing Ombudsman

Overview of our operating environment

As we approach 2024-25, the final year of our 2022-25 Corporate Plan, the external operating environment remains volatile. Inflation and other financial pressures, supply chain issues, recruitment difficulties, mergers or bringing services back in-house, on-going media coverage of poor housing conditions and some adverse coroners' findings are some of the challenges currently faced by social landlords.

Add on top of that increased resident awareness of their right to complain, including through government-led campaigns, and the result is exponential increases in demand for Ombudsman investigations - we have experienced a 91% increase in cases coming to us in the first nine months of 2023-24 compared to the same period last year.

Complaints are an important indicator of culture at a landlord; if residents are treated fairly, things are put right and learning is taken from outcomes, services should improve and the relationship between resident and landlord is preserved. Governing bodies have a crucial role to play here. While a high volume of complaints is not necessarily a bad thing and can be an indicator of an open and accessible process, our on-going increases in volume have been accompanied by rises in maladministration – this year we have made at least one finding of maladministration in 72% of the cases we investigate. That suggests that landlords have not yet fully got to grips with the challenges of their operating environment and their organisational culture needs further work.

Strong leadership and governance are needed to shift organisational cultures and behaviours. Shortfalls in these have been identified across the public sector by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as well as the Housing Ombudsman – indicative that complexity in operating environments and the size of the task in addressing these effectively is not constrained to social housing.

For our members, the pressures caused by the operating environment are unlikely to ease in the near future. Further provisions from the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, designed to drive improvements in service delivery, will also come onstream including compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code and the proactive consumer regulation regime while other measures are consulted on and finalised, for example, Awaab's Law and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. A General Election may also add uncertainty and some disruption.

Overall, 2024-25 is likely to be a difficult year for social landlords and, as a result, we expect demand to continue to increase at significant levels.

Achievements in the year to date

The current year has been one of consolidating on our significant headcount expansion in the previous year and implementing large parts of our strategic programmes. Key achievements to the end of December include:

Extending fairness

- Launching our enhanced enquiries approach that provides more upfront support to residents while they are within their landlord's complaints process.
- Issuing 30 wider orders to prevent issues recurring for the benefit of all residents.
- Enhancing thematic insights for the sector through the publication of two Spotlight Reports: on Knowledge and Information Management; and on Attitudes, Respect and Rights. We have also published three special investigation reports into individual landlords. The Spotlight Reports contain 46 recommendations in total and each of the special investigation reports highlighted wider learning for the sector.
- Engaging with advocacy and advice agencies to increase their understanding of our role and improve signposting to us.
- Being named as the preferred provider of the private rented sector (PRS) Ombudsman scheme.

Encouraging learning

- Delivering our first conference aimed at those holding the role of Member Responsible for Complaints with over 200 landlords represented.
- Completing the consultation on our Complaint Handling Code to put this onto a statutory footing from 1 April 2024 and designing our approach to monitoring compliance against this.
- Publishing our Annual Complaints Review and individual landlord performance reports.
- Producing 59 different learning tools and webinars accessed over 2,800 times by landlord staff.
- Switching our Insight and Complaint Handling Failure Order reports to focus on learning from common areas of service failure and poor complaint handling respectively. We have also used our social media posts and our fortnightly publication of determinations to highlight good practice.

Increasing openness

- Raising awareness of our work through 21 'Meet the Ombudsman' events, reaching over 4,000 residents.

- Holding two meetings of our Accessibility Expert Panel to help steer improvements to our service’s accessibility.
- Meeting with Citizen’s Advice and Shelter to help improve their understanding of our role and what we can do to help to improve signposting to us.
- Developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion dashboard to identify groups that are accessing us proportionately less.
- Continuing to develop the Social Tenants’ Access to Information Requirements appeals service and participating in the Department-lead project group.

Achieving excellence

- Commencing the phased roll out of our landlord portal which allows members to upload evidence and see the status of their open cases. As at the end of December, 98 landlords had accepted their invite to join.
- Undertaking a casework process and system review to ensure our ways of working are effective and efficient.
- Launching an online learning and development system for our colleagues that contains a multitude of resources and records activity.
- Improving our approach to recruitment by reducing the time to hire by 20% and continuously increasing the proportion of offers for the number of roles advertised from mass campaigns.
- Continuously improving the security of our IT systems through changes to our environment and improved training and awareness programmes for our colleague.

Performance, Impact and Efficiency

Performance

The number of disputes resolved by the Ombudsman has increased significantly following our expansion programme. To the end of December 2023, we have determined 102% more cases than for the same nine-month period last year, which is also 44% more than for the whole of 2022-23.

The seriousness of the failings we are investigating is apparent in more cases. We have made at least one finding of maladministration in 72% of the cases we have determined – a record high - compared to the 59% rate we reported for the whole of 2022-23. The average number of findings per case has increased from 2.0 in the prior year to 2.4 as at the end of December and

we have made over 14,000 remedies to put things right, including awarding over £3.7 million in financial compensation. That compares to 6,575 remedies and £1.1 million in compensation across the whole of last year.

The level of service failure we are having to address is concerning and is placing further pressure on our service. While these performance figures demonstrate the resilience of our operating model, the volatile external operating environment is exposing fundamental challenges for the sector and, as a result, continues to create exponential increases in demand for our service.

Disputes entering our formal remit increased by 78% in 21-22; that figure is at 91% in the year to date. In the face of these unprecedented increases, we remain in 'deficit' with on average 137 more cases entering our formal remit than are being determined each month.

There needs to be a collective effort to address the drivers of these complaint volumes. Our work in 2024-25 and beyond will consequently include strategic and operational activities to improve local complaint handling, achieve earlier resolution and reduce demand on our service.

Impact

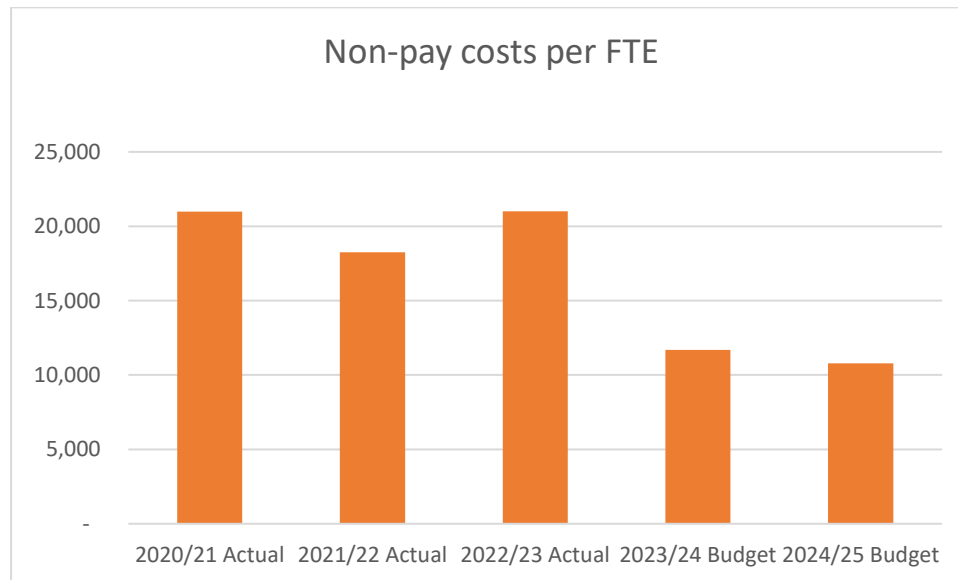
The impact of our work is far reaching with 67% of landlords who responded to our annual survey stating that they had changed their complaint policy or process as a result of our work, which is a slight increase in last year's figure. Our resident survey told us that for 44% of residents, complaints lead to change - up from 30% last year. Residents also said that 63% of their landlords' signposts to the Ombudsman. In addition, our orders have seen landlords change policies and processes including:

- Introducing Complex Case Forums and new processes to prioritise complex repairs in a way that takes a vulnerable resident's needs into account.
- New technology to detect damp and mould early and revised timescales on inspecting damp and mould within five days.
- New processes to check for and record any health issues or vulnerabilities at first triage.
- Introducing dedicated complaints officers and providing training to staff.

We saw one landlord review over 5,000 historic damp and mould cases after we found maladministration in two of their cases, where we also awarded £8,000 in compensation to the affected residents.

Efficiency

We have continued to deliver efficiency savings by reducing overheads, enhancing internal processes and implementing digital solutions. Examples of this include achieving better costs in procurements as a result of our increased size, maintaining the same total accommodation costs while our workforce significantly expanded and rolling out our landlord portal.



Our plans for 2024-25

Our work in 2024-25 has three areas of focus and more detail is set out in the draft 2024-25 Business Plan below:

1. New priority: improving local complaint handling

Tackling the ever-increasing demand for our service has to be a priority during 2024-25 and will be carried forward into our 2025-28 Corporate Plan. We intend to do this through a range of strategic and operational activities, but this needs to be backed up by a whole-system response - we cannot be effective working alone. Planned activities are set out below:

Strategic:

- Improving local complaint handling through the statutory Complaint Handling Code and monitoring compliance with this, as well as provision of a wide range of learning tools tailored by size of landlord and by role, including the Member Responsible for Complaints.
- Driving better landlord complaint handling behaviour through our fee regime. This could potentially be achieved by charging more per home to those who proportionately use our service more and have the highest maladministration rates, or a polluter pays model where both a membership fee and a cost per case are charged. In the year to date, we have dealt with complaints from 42% of our membership. It should be noted that any change to our fee regime would require the approval of the Secretary of State and HM Treasury.

Operational:

- Implementing and embedding the recommendations arising from our casework process and system review.
- Delivering a range of alternative forms of dispute resolution and proportionate investigation, for example, referring cases back to landlords for another attempt to satisfy their resident in appropriate circumstances.
- Developing career pathways to 'grow our own' talent and reduce our dependency on successful external recruitment.
- Introducing quarterly recruitment for casework roles to ensure a ready-made supply of appointable candidates when vacancies arise.
- Ensuring customer expectations are managed proactively throughout their case journey.
- Undertaking discovery work on alternative casework management systems and application of AI in supporting our casework processes.

We are seeking resident and landlord views on our proposed strategic responses of improving local complaint handling and changes the fee regime in our consultation this year.

2. Delivering our new statutory powers and duties

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act gave the Ombudsman a number of new powers and we have already begun to issue wider orders, remedying beyond an individual complaint for the benefit of all residents.

From the start of 2024-25, we will monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code through landlord returns, including their self-assessment, alongside insights from our casework and information from other sources. Landlords should use the self-assessment to assure themselves and their residents that they adhere to the Code.

Our approach will focus on supporting landlords to improve. We will deliver this by enhancing our Centre for Learning offer to provide landlords with a range of learning tools and will direct landlords towards those when we feel they would help. However, where we find that landlords are not taking appropriate and timely action to meet the Code, we will issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order and monitor this to ensure that compliance is achieved. To support wider sector learning, we will publish the findings and outcomes of our self-assessment reviews and compliance work in our quarterly Complaint Handling Failure Order reports.

We intend to launch the consultation on our approach to issuing good practice and requiring self-assessments by landlords in quarter four of 2023-24 which will enable us to issue our first good practice in the summer.

In preparation for the go-live of the Social Tenants' Access to Information Requirements, we expect to consult on the changes required to our Scheme to allow us to deliver the related appeals service during 2024-25. Following that, we will deliver the people-, process- and systems-related activities needed to be ready for a go-live date from 1 April 2025. We will also continue to be part of the Department-led project group responsible for delivery of this new Scheme.

3. Delivering our strategic programmes

The third key area of focus for 2024-25 is to implement the final activities and embed the changes relating to our strategic programmes set out in our 2022-25 Corporate Plan. The main areas of activity against each strategic programme are set out below:

Strategic, intelligence-lead approach to dispute support:

- Embed our enhanced enquires approach which provides more advice and support to residents up-front.
- Focus freed-up resource on addressing resident complaints that have not been recognised by landlords or stalled within their complaints processes.
- Continuing work with advocacy and advice agencies to improve their knowledge and understanding of our service and helping them to better support residents who contact them
- Conduct an options appraisal on the future of our enquiries service to meet demand needs.

N.B. Previously planned landlord intervention work has been subsumed into our Complaint Handling Code compliance monitoring.

Encouraging learning:

- Launch the new learning platform that will host all Centre for Learning content.
- Continue to develop learning tools in different formats and differentiated by role and landlord type.
- Develop our Annual Complaints Review to yield more insights and learning from the types, frequency and patterns of complaints raised with us, particularly where groups or complaint types come to us proportionately less than expected. We will also identify possible future challenges in effective complaint handling.

Awareness raising:

- On-going business as usual work to engage directly with residents through ‘Meet the Ombudsman’ events. These will both raise awareness in general and target specific groups or geographical areas that access us proportionately less than others.
- Embed the work from our Access project to ensure our service and routes into it are as inclusive as possible.

Employer brand:

- Develop our employee value proposition.
- Embed our L&D ‘Academy’ for all colleagues.
- Undertake a discovery and options appraisal for caseworker accreditation.

Continue our digitisation journey:

- Continue to onboard landlords to our online complaint handling portal.
- Undertake option appraisals in the following areas: casework management system; stakeholder relationship management database; and governance, risk and PMO system.
- Undertake discovery into the opportunities for artificial intelligence (AI) and automation in our casework process

Private Rented Sector Ombudsman design work

At the time of writing, Ministers have confirmed we are the preferred provider to deliver the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Ombudsman scheme. We are continuing to engage with the Department on this and explore how best to deliver a high quality, streamlined and cross-tenure redress service. The cost of our current engagement is not funded through fees. We have been clear

that if we are appointed, this work should not disrupt the delivery of our social housing case investigations. The final decision on the appointment of the PRS Ombudsman will be made once the Renters (Reform) Bill has received Royal Assent, so we are not consulting on this issue in our 2024-25 Business Plan, which has been produced solely on our current remit.

Key performance indicators and fee

Key performance indicators

The relentless and exponential growth in demand for dispute resolution means that our open caseload has continued to grow throughout the year and increase in age, despite our significant performance improvements. Given the volatile external environment, we expect the growth in cases received to continue at between 50%-80% in 2024-25, above the 30% previously modelled. This is addressed further below.

Alongside further process improvements to increase our effectiveness and efficiency, we will continue to recruit throughout 2024-25 to increase our capacity, but this will be done sustainably without negatively affecting output across our casework teams. Recognising that some of these efforts will take time to yield results, we have been exploring more immediate ways of reducing the determination deficit. This business plan includes a commitment to bring in temporary resources from other government departments to support caseworkers in determining more cases without growing the permanent workforce.

While a whole-system approach to improving local complaint handling and the causes of complaints is implemented and embedded, our targets should reflect the current environment and stretching improvements to our performance. Consequently, we have amended our timeliness targets for the proportion of all cases determined within six and 12 months to reflect the exponential growth in demand experienced in the year to date. At the start of the year, we expect that less than 10% of the case load will be over 12 months old but that our ability to determine cases will be outstripped by volumes for the first quarter, following the bulge in casework received following the Awaab Ishak inquest. After this, we expect to be able to consistently reduce the age of the caseload and no case will be over 12 months old at year-end.

We have also introduced further targets to demonstrate effective management of the open caseload across the year relating to the prioritisation of high risk and increases to our output.

The remaining targets are unchanged but stretching in the context of the high volumes driven by the external operating environment. The following casework targets in each area of our balanced scorecard are proposed for 2024-25:

Outcome	Measure
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of quality assurance reviews find casework is acceptable or better
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of high-risk cases are decided within six months* No case is more than 12 months old at year-end** 1,400 more cases are determined in 2024-25 than in 2023-24** 30% of all cases are determined within six months** 80% of all cases are determined within 12 months**
Customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of residents are satisfied with the service provided at dispute support 80% of residents whose complaint was upheld were satisfied with the service provided 50% of the residents whose complaint was not upheld were satisfied with the service provided
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98% compliance with orders within 3 months 100% compliance with orders within 6 months

*High risk cases are those where we assess the nature of the complaint, the length of time it has remained unresolved and the individual circumstances of the resident and other occupants of the home may cause a high level of detriment, based on the information available to us.

**Provided that recruitment and retention yields minimum expected new starter FTEs at each round

Due to the volatile external operating environment, we cannot forecast with certainty the expected full year demand growth for 2024-25. Our plans assume that demand will increase by between 50% and 80% compared to 2023-24. We are also undertaking another round of caseworker recruitment which will inform our opening headcount, and the impact of immediate changes from our process and system review will be evaluated in the final quarter of the year. Greater certainty over all of these variables will be available by year-end and we will confirm the target performance levels in our final 2024-25 Business Plan.

Fees

Our fee has been calculated to support sustainable increases in caseworker headcount and deliver more determinations in the face of continuing significant demand increases. Growth in demand has exceeded our 78% forecast in the first nine months of 2023-24 and is expected to be significantly above the 30% increase previously modelled in 2024-25.

The fee also includes the cost of delivering the new powers and duty conferred on us through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, one-off costs to support our transition to a larger organisation and make our ways of working more effective and efficient, planned capital expenditure and the impact of inflation.

As we were unable to recruit to all planned roles in-year, we will use the resultant deferred income to reduce the total fee to a payable fee. The payable fee breaks down as follows:

Element	Fee (£)
2023-24 total fee	£6.75
Demand-driven pay and non-pay costs	£1.31
One-off consolidation costs following expansion	£0.20
Delivering new statutory powers and duties (Social Housing Regulation Act 2023)	£0.45
Inflation	£0.43
Capital expenditure	£0.02
Total fee	£9.16
Reduction for deferred income	-£1.13
Payable fee	£8.03

The fee can also be broken down by directorate as follows:

Directorate	Fee (£)	Share of total fee
Dispute Support and Resolution	£7.10	78%
Quality, Engagement and Development	£1.14	12%
Finance and Corporate Services	£0.92	10%
Total	£9.16	100%

Recruitment will occur throughout 2024-25 to ensure headcount expansion is sustainable and does not disrupt business as usual delivery.

Consultation

Prior to its introduction, we consulted extensively on our 2022-25 Corporate Plan including the strategic objectives, expected performance levels and fees. Activity in our first year was largely focussed on supporting the significant headcount expansion. Year two has been focussed on developing and implementing our strategic programmes and new responsibilities under the Social Housing Regulation Act, as well as consolidation following our significant expansion to ensure our ways of working meet the expectations of a much larger organisation.

The final year of our plan will be focussed on delivering effective and efficient casework, our new powers and duties under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and embedding our strategic programmes. Given the persistent volatility in the external operating environment and resultant exponential growth in demand for our service, 2024-25 will also be focussed on supporting landlords to improve local complaint handling through a range of strategic and operational activities that need to be part of a whole-system response to ensure they are effective. This should reduce the need for residents to raise a complaint and result in more complaints resolved earlier by landlords themselves.

Our consultation this year is seeking feedback on two aspects of our planned strategic actions – the learning tools that we can provide for landlords to improve local complaint handling and to test support for possible changes to our fee regime beyond 2024-25 intended to drive improved landlord complaint handling behaviour. At any given time, there will be some landlords who are responsible for both higher than typical complaint volumes per home and have a higher average upheld rate, regardless of size. While we are concerned not to drive complaints underground, we also want to explore whether those landlords should be contributing proportionately more to the costs of resolving disputes by the Ombudsman as they consume proportionately more of our resources.

The consultation questions are set out below and apply to residents, landlords and representative bodies. The final two questions apply to landlords only. The consultation will ask you to indicate which category of respondent you fall into at the start and you do not need to answer all questions.

1. What are the barriers to effective local complaint handling at stage one?
2. What are the barriers to effective local complaint handling at stage two?
3. What learning tools can we provide that would be useful in addressing these barriers?
4. What would be the most effective format for these tools, for example, webinar, podcast or video?
5. Should we differentiate our tools by:
 - a. Landlord size?
 - b. Landlord type?
 - c. Role in the landlord, i.e. complaints team, executive and member of the governing body?
 - d. Something else – please state
6. Do you have any other comments on how we can support effective local complaint handling?
7. Do you think the fee regime should include some form of a ‘polluter pays’ model – yes or no?
8. If yes, please indicate what alternative models you would support:
 - a. Differential fee rates for those that bring proportionately more complaints to the Ombudsman relative to the number of homes they own and have higher than average maladministration rates
 - b. Membership fee plus a charge per case regardless of outcome
 - c. Membership fee plus differentiated charges per case, with higher charges where maladministration is found
 - d. Something else – please state
9. If yes to Q7, please indicate the foreseen benefits for the model supported under Q8
10. If yes to Q7, please indicate the foreseen risks and possible mitigations for the model supported under Q8

11. If no to Q7, please indicate why you prefer the existing model
12. Do you have any other comments on the fee regime?
13. Do you have any comments on our draft 2024-25 Business Plan?
14. If you are a landlord, what volume of complaints do you expect to handle in total in 2023-24?
15. If you are a landlord, what percentage growth or decline do you expect on that number in 2024-25?

Draft 2024-25 Business Plan

Strategic Objective 1: Extending fairness

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
<p>1.1. Strategic, intelligence-led approach to dispute support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted landlord support to improve complaint handling for all residents• Residents and landlords are empowered to resolve complaints earlier and locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver quality, proportionate, timely and impactful dispute support activities that provide high levels of customer satisfaction and effectively manage customer expectations throughout their case journey.• Start to deliver the service changes resulting from the 2023-24 review of our process and systems in dispute support.• Embed our new approach to providing more up-front support to help residents while their complaint is going through the landlords' process and focus dispute support activities where there is evidence landlords' complaint handling has failed.• Continue to work with partners to improve their signposting to our service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 60% of residents are satisfied with the service provided at dispute support

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an options appraisal on the future of our enquiries service to meet demand needs. 	
<p>1.2. Strengthening the framework for the Ombudsman investigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, findings from individual cases benefit all residents • Restoring the landlord-resident relationship through appropriate redress • Remedies, orders and recommendations have an impact on landlord services • Our inquisitorial approach is enhanced through specialisms • Quality Board with external members provides assurance over our approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver quality, proportionate, timely and impactful complaint investigations that provide high levels of customer satisfaction and effectively manage customer expectations throughout their case journey. • Embed our casework professionalisation approach and create a learning bank through our specialisms and subject matter experts. • Start to implement alternative forms of dispute resolution. • Start to deliver the service changes resulting from the 23-24 review of our casework process and systems in dispute resolution. • Review our remaining casework policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of residents whose complaint was upheld were satisfied with the service provided • 50% of the residents whose complaint was not upheld were satisfied with the service provided • 98% compliance with orders within 3 months • 100% compliance with orders within 6 months • 95% of quality assurance reviews find casework was acceptable or better • 95% of high risk cases are decided within six months by 2024-25 • 1,400 more cases determined in 2024-25 than in 2023-24* • 30% of all cases are determined within six months* • 80% of all cases are determined within 12 months* • No case is more than 12 months old at year-end*

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
		*provided recruitment and retention yields minimum expected new starter FTEs at each round
<p>1.3. Enhanced thematic insights and systemic investigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Spotlight reports build a picture of the quality of residents' homes • We undertake systemic investigations where we identify serious or repeated complaint handling failure • We are responsive to other issues or themes as they arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to produce high quality and impactful systemic, spotlight and other reports. • Publish at least one Spotlight report • Publish four Insight Reports 	
<p>1.4. Consulting on and delivering our extended powers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a picture of where increased powers would benefit residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish our first good practice guidance and implement our approach to self-assessment against this. • Deliver our new duty to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code and develop measures to capture the impact of this work. • Publish our updated MoU with the Regulator and continue to meet with them regularly. 	
<p>1.5. Growing our membership and closing gaps in redress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with DLUHC to design the PRS Ombudsman. 	

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic expansion of voluntary members (paused given Renters' Reform Bill)• Inform government policy to reduce housing redress complexity and close gaps for residents		

Strategic Objective 2: Encouraging learning

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
<p>2.1. Establish a Centre for Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the sector's complaint handling through an integrated offer, differentiated by role and landlord type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver Centre for Learning content, differentiated by role and landlord type. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the level of landlord engagement with our learning tools over this corporate plan period compared to the previous period.
<p>2.2. Driving a positive complaints culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlords and residents can understand each member's performance based on the complaints we have investigated Landlord governing bodies are better able to hold their organisation to account for its complaints handling Landlords are aware of current and future complaints handling challenges Landlords have insight into groups or complaint types that may face barriers in accessing or progressing complaints through their procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to publish individual landlord reports and our Annual Complaints Review, highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> areas where groups or complaint types access us proportionately less than expected, and future challenges. Continue to write all landlords with high or low maladministration rates 	

Strategic Objective 3: Increasing openness

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
<p>3.1. Raise awareness of our service, build understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More residents are aware of our service and understand the benefits of alternative dispute resolution • Improved access to the Ombudsman amongst groups that have not used our service in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the learning from our Access project and our EDI dashboard to ensure our service is as inclusive as possible. • Continue to raise awareness and understanding of our service through all available channels, including ‘Meet the Ombudsman’ events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold at least six ‘Meet the Ombudsman’ events across the country
<p>3.2. Work collaboratively with partner organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved signposting to our service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop agreements with the advocacy and advice agencies we work with, and MoUs with other Ombudsman services and the regulatory bodies we interact with, to ensure effective signposting to our service 	
<p>3.3. Prepare for go-live of the Social Tenants’ Access to Information Requirements appeals service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals under the Social Tenants’ Access to Information Requirements are delivered on time and in a fair way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with DLUHC and plan the implementation of the Social Tenants’ Access to Information Requirements appeals service. 	

Strategic Objective 4: Achieving excellence

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
<p>4.1. Develop our employer brand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are accredited as a top 100 place to work and regarded as a socially responsible, diverse and inclusive employer We are an employer of choice Colleagues are positive about their learning and development opportunities and take advantage of these 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop career pathways to grow our own caseworker talent Undertake quarterly recruitment for casework roles Undertake a discovery and options appraisal for caseworker accreditation Embed our L&D Academy for all colleagues Develop our employee value proposition 	
<p>4.2. Continue our digitisation journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a fully digital complaint handling channel for landlords and residents Our back-office systems are more efficient and effective Our digital office supports effective hybrid working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to onboard landlords to the online complaint handling portal. Undertake option appraisal exercises over the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> casework management system stakeholder relationship management database governance, risk and PMO system Undertake a discovery exercise on the opportunities for the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the following landlord groups with onboarding to the portal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> every landlord with more than 10,000 homes landlords with between 1,000 and 10,000 homes that place a higher demand on our service

Strategic priorities and outcomes	Year three deliverables (2024-25)	Key performance indicators
	automation within our casework process	