



Briefing

Learning from Severe Maladministration

08 October 2024

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We will cover

- Background and Context
- The headlines of the case
- Responding appropriately, looking beyond the case to the themes
- Assurance and Governance
- Ensuring improvements are embedded
- Continuing improvement



Torus Housing

Background and Context

- Torus is the North West's largest affordable housing provider with approximately 40,000 homes and a strong development programme across the region
- Torus combines the local authority housing stock of Liverpool, Warrington & St. Helens
- This case took place at a difficult time for the sector post COVID, post amalgamation and when repairs and maintenance programmes were affected by difficulties in the building sector
- Issues occurred before the implementation of October 2022 HOS Code
- To date, it is the only Severe Maladministration finding Torus has received

Case ref: 202212668 Severe Maladministration

Published in May 2023, the issues dated back to December 2021, with the events occurring between then and completion of work in January 2023.

The themes were:

- **Untimely responses to Damp and Mould:** initial response delayed, compounded by use of sub-contractors
- **Record Keeping related to 'No access' visits:** repeated no access visits led to work cancellation, but records of the visits were not thorough
- **Decanting:** The option of a decant was not explored because work required was considered minor. This was a poor judgement

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- **Addressing vulnerabilities:** the impact on the tenant was not appropriately considered or reflected in support or remedies
- **Communication:** the resident had to chase up actions and was not provided with a forward action plan
- **Complaint handling:** at the time 'informal' complaints were part of Torus process and timescales were not adhered to for the formal process

A Catalyst for Change

- The Determination was a catalyst for service improvement across Torus
- Seen as a minimum requirement, the Orders and Recommendations were delivered ahead of required timescales
- Torus created and implemented a comprehensive 24-point action plan, agreed by Board, and jointly overseen with the Landlord Operations Committee
- The plan looks beyond the specifics of this case to address the root causes of failure

A Catalyst for Change

- The plan has assigned owners for tasks AND accountable Group directors who report progress at Group Management Team
- Pentana is used to track actions through to completion and flag where implementation is delayed
- Landlord Operations Committee receive Quarterly updates and report non-compliance to Group Board

Thematic improvements

- **Culture and behaviour** - Identifying where practice varied from Torus Values and taking performance actions
- **Assets practice** - Initiating a complete review of the structure and functioning of the Repairs & Maintenance Service. Currently, Torus's contractor completes 2,500 repairs per week
- **Communication** - Informing residents at key stages, eg post surveys of intended works and timescales
- **Systems and Processes** - Cancellation of works halted without a robust consideration of the rationale

Thematic improvements

- **Complaints Handling** - Review of process and adherence to policy and procedure. Introduction of new 15 - person Customer Resolution Team
- **Contract Management and Performance** - Revised process for Repairs & Maintenance implemented. This included reviewing the reporting regime
- **Housing Practice** - The establishment of clear guidelines for when the behaviour and language of tenants is to be addressed. This will include a triaging process by senior colleagues and involve leaders to, where necessary address this

Governance and Assurance

Torus has ensured senior oversight of the implementation and delivery of the action plan:

Routine reports to senior structures (GLT, GEMT), Landlord Operations Committee (LOC) on delivery of actions. Any failure to deliver against timescales or scope of actions are reported to Board

Group Board have been kept up to date with progress and target timescales to ensure there is monitoring of the delivery of the actions

Chair of LOC is the Member Responsible for Complaints. Specific Complaints Report introduced

'Deep dive' sessions hosted with LOC, Scrutiny Group and Complaints Panel on Ombudsman findings, Compliance with the HOS Code and service Improvement

Continuing improvement from this case

Beyond the delivery of the Action Plan, which is now complete, there is a determination to maintain the thrust of the improvements:

- **Overhaul of the No Access process:** over time this has demanded considerable resource in the Customer Hub, this now owned within the Assets team. Benefits direct practice feedback and ability to take contractor actions
- **Creation of the Rapid Resolution Team;** this is in accordance with the Code and helps to distinguish service enquiries from complaints and address these within 48hrs
- **Centralised Complaints Team:** this created in October 2023 amid the steep increase in complaints and Ombudsman activity. Recently renamed the Customer Resolution Team, a more positive emphasis on resolving dissatisfaction
- **Creation of a Competency Framework** with application across the Group

Continuing improvement

- **Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustments;** new policy supported by training and emphasised at Corporate 'Learning Circle' events
- **Creation of specific Damp, Mould and Disrepair Team.** This has added emphasis given Awaab's Law
- **Customer Excellence Training** rolled out across the Group
- **Learning Officer role created** to use data from complaints themes and Determinations to inform the creation of Service Improvement Plans in each operational area
- Monthly '**What have we learnt from Complaints' Learning Bulletin** issued across the Group
- **Audit and Risk Focus:** two audits of Complaints practice undertaken since this Determination reported through Committee to Group Board



Thank you

Happy to take feedback
and any questions?