

## **Cobalt Board's Response to the Housing Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024, the Board reviewed the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code and agreed it to be a true reflection of Cobalt's complaint handling. As Board Member responsible for complaints, I had previously scrutinised and challenged the self-assessment. Three areas of risk were identified and actions to address these were agreed as follows:

- We will update the Complaints Policy to include clarity of how we promote the Code.
- We will ensure record keeping includes complete case notes and correspondence with other parties, including any reports or surveys.
- We will embed an effective approach to establish and update records connected with reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Board also discussed Cobalt's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report including lessons learned from complaints received in 2023-24. Complaints increased during Quarter 3, mainly as a result of poor contractor performance and the following actions were undertaken, resulting in improved performance:

- A thorough review of the complaints process was undertaken in Q4 23/24.
- A new referral system was implemented to ensure that both internal and external complaint requests are directed to the same inbox. Dedicated staff were put in place to manage the inbox and triage complaints as soon as possible.
- Managers and Heads of Service provide guidance and resources as needed, to improve the overall customer experience.
- Dedicated complaint officers have been in post for four months and have the authority to provide discretionary compensation to effectively address complaints and acknowledge service failures. This has improved the timescales associated with resolving complaints.
- New contractors for our repairs service have been procured.

Performance improved in quarter 4, as we focused on preventing recurring issues. We are quickly identifying and addressing issues with internal processes, whilst ensuring the new system can focus on automating specific tasks.

Board is committed to ensuring complaints are handled effectively and that Cobalt continues to take an open and transparent approach to demonstrate accountability to our customers and other stakeholders.

**Pam Smith**  
**Board Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)**  
**Cobalt Housing**