

Thorngate Churcher Trust (TCT) Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/2025

Annual Self-Assessment Against the Code

As part of TCT's commitment to meeting the requirements outlined in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, TCT conducted an annual self-assessment to ensure their complaint handling policy aligns with the Code's requirements. Key findings from this self-assessment include:

Compliance Areas:

- TCT policy ensures accessibility for all residents, including clear guidance on how to lodge a complaint.
- Timescales for complaint responses remain consistent with Code requirements (e.g., acknowledging complaints within 5 working days).
- TCT maintain a two-stage complaint resolution process in line with the Code's expectations.

Areas for Improvement:

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.

TCT will ensure that their upcoming resident survey clearly informs residents that they can submit complaints separately. This was not explicitly addressed in the 2023 survey but will be included in the 2025 TSM survey.

TCT has examined records of past complaints and resolutions for the last 12 months, April 2024 - March 2025.

Total Number of Complaints Received: 3

Complaints Resolved at Stage 1: 100%

Complaints Escalated to Stage 2: none

Complaints Resolved within Target Timescales:

Stage 1: 100%

Stage 2: not applicable

Repeat Complaints: There are no complaints that are recurring or related to unresolved issues.

Resident Satisfaction Ratings: TCT score is 63% for complaints, 2023 is the first year that they have calculated the satisfaction score, they will be conducting a resident survey end of this year so they will be able to compare results.

Resolution Rates: The complaints that were received were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Three complaints fell outside the scope of TCT formal complaints policy. Nonetheless, they handled them with the same level of attention and care. They were regarding Weekly

Maintenance Contribution (WMC) increase and neighbour behaviour and dispute with other residents.

There are no findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman, or any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of TCT.

Service Improvements from Learning

TCT are committed to learning from every complaint to improve their services. The following key service improvements were implemented:

Complaint Resolution 1: Privacy Concerns During Maintenance Visits

Nature of Complaint:

A resident raised concerns regarding the standard procedure of wardens checking all rooms during maintenance visits, despite prior notification that the property would be unoccupied. The resident expressed that this practice felt intrusive, though it was acknowledged as part of the organisation's safety protocol.

Action Taken:

After investigating the complaint, TCT provided the resident with three alternative options for maintenance visits, allowing them to tailor the service to their privacy preferences:

- **Option 1:** Continuation of standard procedure.
- **Option 2:** Warden assumes closed-door rooms are unoccupied and only enters the area requiring maintenance.
- **Option 3:** Maintenance conducted only in the resident's presence during specified hours.

Resident Response:

The resident selected **Option 2** and expressed satisfaction with the resolution, appreciating the flexibility provided.

Service Improvement:

This complaint prompted a review of privacy-related procedures for maintenance visits. The new option-based approach will now be communicated to all residents during maintenance scheduling to better respect their preferences while upholding safety standards.

Complaint Resolution 2: Mismanagement of Personal Property

Nature of Complaint:

A resident's family raised concerns regarding the mismanagement of a privately-owned wheelchair, purchased for the late father of the resident, which had been mistakenly moved from a locked storage room and lent out without permission. This caused significant distress to the resident and her family.

Action Taken:

Following an investigation, it was found that:

- The wheelchair was mistakenly moved to a common storage area for donated mobility aids during a reorganisation of storage cupboards.
- The absence of a label led to the relief warden's assumption that it was available for general use.

- The cushion was temporarily misplaced but subsequently recovered and returned to the resident.

The landlord issued a formal apology to the resident and her family for the misunderstanding and emotional impact, ensuring the return of the cushion and clarifying the circumstances behind the error.

Resident Response:

The family acknowledged the return of the cushion and appreciated the apology but emphasized the need for better property management to prevent such issues.

Service Improvement:

To prevent recurrence, the following measures have been introduced:

- All personal items stored in shared spaces are now required to be clearly labelled with the owner's name.
- A detailed inventory will be maintained for items stored in shared or locked storage areas.
- Staff training has been updated to reinforce the importance of distinguishing personal property from communal resources.

Complaint Resolution 3: Mice Infestation

Nature of Complaint:

A resident reported a severe mice infestation in their flat, which persisted despite ongoing pest control and maintenance efforts. The issue caused significant distress and contributed to the resident's decision to vacate the property.

Action Taken:

Upon receiving the complaint, the following steps were taken:

- **Pest Control Measures:** Weekly pest control visits were implemented, and stronger bait was placed in key areas to increase effectiveness.
- **Maintenance Efforts:** The maintenance team conducted thorough inspections to identify and seal entry points, dedicating significant time to addressing the issue.
- **Resident Support:** The resident was offered alternative accommodations, including a guest room and options at other sites.

Resident Response:

Despite the steps taken, the resident decided to move sooner than planned due to the prolonged nature of the issue and its impact on their living conditions. The complaint was officially closed upon their departure.

Service Improvement:

This case highlighted the need for enhanced preventative measures and faster escalation protocols for pest-related issues. As a result:

- A Pest Management Review has been initiated to assess and improve the effectiveness of pest control contractors.
- Proactive Inspections will be conducted in high-risk areas to address potential issues before they escalate.

Service Improvement:

This case highlighted the need for enhanced preventative measures and a more efficient escalation process for pest-related issues. As a result, the following improvements have been implemented:

- A comprehensive review has been initiated to assess and enhance the effectiveness of pest control contractors.
- High-risk areas will now undergo regular inspections to identify and address potential infestations before they escalate.
- Wardens now have direct contact with pest control services, ensuring immediate action when an issue is reported.
- A local pest control contractor has been contracted to ensure quicker attendance and resolution of infestations.
- Maintaining open lines of communication with residents during infestations allows for swift identification and resolution of underlying causes.

This proactive approach aims to prevent similar issues in the future and improve overall resident satisfaction.

TCT has kept detailed records of all interactions related to the complaints, including the initial complaint, any communications with the resident/complainant, and the resolution.

This can be helpful for reference in case similar issues arise in the future.

Conclusion and Future Commitments

Since the last report TCT have looked at ways to collate resident feedback on complaint handling, formal or informal feedback mechanisms. TCT has added complaints to the agenda of TCT quarterly resident consultative meeting. TCT already supplies suggestion boxes at all sites, feedback surveys after a repair have been carried out and complaint process is in fortnightly resident newsletter as well as on the TCTs website with an online form.

TCT remain dedicated to maintaining the highest standards in complaint handling and continuously improving services for their residents. TCT priorities for the coming year include:

- Enhancing tools for complaint tracking and reporting, by implementing a log to record service requests, enquiries and comment/suggestions to ensure that TCT acknowledge or respond.
- Expanding resident engagement opportunities to gather feedback on TCT performance, through resident survey end of 2025.

The governing board's response to the report:

The governing board's response to the complaints report dictated by the MCR and agreed with by those present and proxies.

“There is a robust approach to responding to complaints by the organisation in both dealing with individual complaints and where appropriate changes to policies or operational delivery have been made”