

1. Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) updated its Complaint Handling Code (the Code) from 1 April 2024. The Code encapsulated the additional powers that the HOS had been given under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

The updated Code required providers to:

- Submit an online self-assessment in a prescribed format on the HOS website.
- Produce an annual complaint performance and service improvement report for submission to the governing body.
- Produce a response to the complaint performance and service improvement report from the governing body.
- Publish both the above documents on websites, alongside a copy of the Complaint Handling Code.

All documentation relating to the submission has been uploaded on to the Vivere website (www.vivereliving.co.uk).

The Code emphasises the importance of complaints for learning and service improvement and compliance with the Code has assisted Vivere in developing a more robust customer approach to handling complaints.

2. Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

A self-assessment against the updated Complaint Handling Code was undertaken after the year-end. No amendments were made to the Complaints and Feedback Policy as the policy was updated in 2024.

The self-assessment concluded that Vivere is fully compliant with the Code.

3. Complaint Handling Performance

Vivere received 1 complaint in 2024-25. This was a small number but on par with previous years, as Vivere is a small provider, focused mostly on new build shared ownership and rental properties. This means that currently Vivere does not have any properties over 10 years old and therefore avoids many of the property/asset management related complaints that other providers face.

The 1 complaint related to mould at the property which had been cited as a Tenant lifestyle issue. However we continue to monitor the situation and respond appropriately. This complaint remains open at the year end.

The complaint is ongoing and has not yet been escalated beyond the service request.

The team at Vivere was very pleased with the result of only having one complaint that was during the year. It was felt that this emphasised the work undertaken in responding clearly to customers so that matters were resolved at the earliest opportunity.

During 2025, Vivere will focus on continuing to deliver a high quality service and keep the number of complaints low.

4. Complaint Satisfaction

The volume of complaints is low and the feedback from the recent TSM report in 2024 suggested that the level of satisfaction with the service provided was in line with the above complaint. There was one dissatisfied customer which is the complainant identified above.

Various changes have been made to the process during the year and it is hoped that the next TSM Survey will evidence further improvement in satisfaction levels amongst Vivere's customers although it is difficult to monitor this due to low level of responses (21) and onward sale of properties to Simply Affordable meaning that there is a low number of ongoing tenants.

5. Overall Complaints Performance

Vivere has historically had a low level of complaints and this can be explained by its small size and the quality of its stock (the majority of the current portfolio is less than three years old). Vivere also has a tradition of dealing with customers on an individual basis and dealing with issues specifically with each customer. This arises from knowing customers individually. This results in the majority of complaints being dealt with at Stage 1.

Vivere acknowledges the importance of complaints and the learning that can be derived from them. The reporting on complaints to Board has improved over the year and is now reported as part of the operation report quarterly.

Vivere has streamlined its processes so that the Property Manager takes overall responsibility for dealing with complaints, with first line support from the Financial Controller.

Culturally, Vivere has a small team of relatively senior staff so that they have extensive experience in dealing with customers.

6. Service Improvement

Vivere has developed a Service Improvement Plan for 2025 from the learning around complaints. The proposed improvements to processes will help Vivere to improve its services to both tenants and leaseholders.

A number of objectives have been established for 2025:

- Improve the timescales for complaint resolution, aiming to have 100% of Stage 1 responses within 10 working days and Stage 2 responses within 20 working days. Vivere will do this by seeking early review of customer expectations. This will be part of the steps within the process.
- Improve Vivere's website for customers who are interested in this area.

These planned improvements build on the existing processes. The work being undertaken to understand the customer base and to develop Vivere's customer engagement activities will also help improve the whole customer experience. The focus of the organisation on the customer experience will ensure that learning from complaints will continue to be an important element of business activity.