

“Tina Barnard, Board Chair for Populo Homes has said”:

This year’s Housing Ombudsman self-assessment has provided a valuable opportunity for us to reflect on the progress made since last year, building on the systems and processes we initially put in place. It has allowed us to assess how effectively these mechanisms are working in practice, while also highlighting new areas for improvement and innovation.

As a result, we have undertaken the following actions, and cross-referenced our self-assessment against Populo Homes’s complaints handling in practice, to ensure that we maintain a robust and highly satisfactory complaints management service:

- The Populo Homes Board has appointed a new Board Member Responsible for complaints who plays a key role in Populo Homes’ complaints management by providing assurance to the Board on the effectiveness of the landlord’s complaints process.
- The Populo Homes Board can confirm that we have received and reviewed the annual complaint performance and service improvement report, and self-assessment. Following our review and challenge, we can confirm that we are satisfied with the contents of the reports.
- The Customer Services management team have implemented weekly meetings to oversee the handling of complaints going forward. These meetings are team-wide, ensuring that all CS staff are aware of current complaints deadlines and can share relevant information to team leaders. The purpose of these meetings is to review all complaints, assess the current service offering, identify opportunities to improve, showcase best practice, and agree on lessons learned.
- To strengthen our approach to managing and resolving complaints effectively, a designated member of the Customer Service team has been formally assigned responsibility for overseeing operational aspects complaints handling. This includes ensuring that all concerns raised are addressed in a timely, consistent, and transparent manner, in line with our organisational policies and regulatory requirements.

As a result of the review of our practice and policies against the new updated ‘Code’, we have identified a number of issues as part of our review and have already begun to take steps to address these issues as we head into the new reporting period for complaints handling. The issues identified include:

New Housing Management System – Resident feedback indicated that the previous IT system, RentCafe, was not a suitable platform for managing Populo Homes properties. In response, we are implementing a new housing management system, HomeMaster, across the organisation and plan to have the complaints module implemented by December 2025. HomeMaster is a comprehensive platform designed to streamline the management of social housing tenancies. Once fully rolled out, it will provide residents with a more efficient way to request repairs, submit complaints, and offer feedback.

The new system also features an integrated case management module specifically designed to handle disputes, complaints, and anti-social behaviour (ASB). This functionality offers a more user-friendly and comprehensive interface for staff, enabling all case-related information to be stored in one centralised location. By reducing fragmentation and improving oversight, it helps prevent confusion between cases and supports more effective resolution.

Complaints tracking: Previous TSM – We acknowledge that our previous report highlighted concerns regarding delayed responses and missed deadlines in the handling of complaints. In direct response to this feedback, we have introduced a comprehensive complaint tracking system, managed by a designated team member to ensure accountability and timely resolution. Additionally, we have delivered targeted training to our staff, covering the full complaints handling procedure, relevant regulatory codes, and the role of the Housing Ombudsman. This initiative reinforces our commitment to transparency, responsiveness, and continuous service improvement.

Team Restructure - We have implemented strategic changes to our frontline services, including a comprehensive team restructure aimed at improving response times and fostering a proactive approach to complaint resolution. A key component of this initiative involves deploying team members across multiple sites to enhance visibility, strengthen resident engagement, and facilitate direct, on-the-ground communication. This presence ensures that concerns are addressed promptly and that residents feel supported through consistent and accessible service delivery.

Repair Callbacks - Following a comprehensive review of resident complaints received over the past year, it has been identified that the predominant cause of complaints relates to property maintenance and repair issues. In response to this trend, our Customer Service Advisors now conduct weekly follow-up calls with residents to assess their satisfaction with completed repair work. These proactive engagements enable us to gather valuable feedback, promptly address any outstanding concerns, and mitigate the need for formal complaints by ensuring issues are resolved swiftly and effectively.

Populo Homes are looking forward to taking forward the lessons learned from the self-assessment and reporting on our aspiring successes for our new initiatives in the future.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tina Barnard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tina Barnard

Chair of Populo Homes Board