

Portus Supported Housing

Governing Body Response

To the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025/26

The Board of Portus Supported Housing (PSH) and the Members Responsible for Complaints (MRC), Susie Smyth and Cherry Dunk, have reviewed the 2025/26 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, incorporating data from Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (BeST) and Westmoreland Supported Housing Limited (WSHL) prior to the merger on 1 December 2025, and from PSH as the combined organisation thereafter, together with the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This is the first Governing Body Response produced by the combined PSH Board, bringing together the separate governance processes previously operated by BeST and WSHL. Following the merger, the self-assessment against the Code was re-presented to the new combined Board and resubmitted to the Ombudsman on 1 December 2025, fulfilling the commitment made in WSHL's own 2024/25 response. The Board also notes the continuity of leadership through this transition, with Jayne Francis-Ward continuing as Chair across both the former WSHL Board and the new PSH Board.

We are satisfied that the self-assessment accurately reflects our complaint handling practice and demonstrates compliance with the Code. The Board has had full sight of the report and provided scrutiny and challenge at governance level, including in relation to the operational impact of the merger transition on complaint handling performance during Quarter 3.

Progress made

During 2025/26, PSH (incorporating BeST and WSHL) has made significant improvements, including:

- Responding to approximately 97% of complaints on time across the year, compared with 90% in 2024/25 – a further improvement despite the additional operational complexity of merging two organisations' complaint handling functions mid-year.
- Successfully bringing BeST and WSHL's complaint handling functions together into a single, unified PSH process from 1 December 2025, with no Housing Ombudsman determinations or findings of non-compliance with the Code at any point across either legacy organisation or PSH during the year.
- Managing a total of 106 complaints across the year (101 from BeST in 2024/25, for reference, though this year's figure now also includes WSHL's volumes for the first time following the merger, so is not a direct like-for-like comparison).
- Continuing to strengthen governance and oversight, including quarterly engagement between the Customer Director and the Members Responsible for Complaints, Susie Smyth and Cherry Dunk.
- Ensuring that all staff involved in handling complaints, across both legacy organisations and now PSH, have completed training on the Code and on complaint handling procedures.
- Reducing the outstanding complaints action backlog from 54 to 12 cases through dedicated working-group focus.

- Introducing Plentific to improve oversight, tracking and scheduling of repairs and contractor performance, including extending contractor coverage into areas where existing subcontractor networks were previously insufficient.
- Agreeing and implementing a single, unified PSH Compensation Policy, standardising thresholds and redress in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance.
- Fully resolving the action carried forward from WSHL's 2024/25 self-assessment (Code provision 1.4), which the WSHL Board required to be addressed as a matter of urgency following the merger: PSH's systems now sufficiently distinguish and record service requests separately from formal complaints, closing an area of non-compliance that remained open for WSHL. This centralization was completed after the 1 December 2025 self-assessment was finalised, which had still noted this as ongoing work; the Board is assured that this has since been fully embedded.
- Delivering service improvements in areas such as repairs, damp and mould, communication, and contractor performance, including specific learning actions arising from individual cases.

Opportunities for improvement

The Board acknowledges that, while progress has been made, there is more to do, including:

- Continuing to close the gap to 100% of complaints responded to on time.
- Embedding a culture of learning from complaints consistently across all areas, with actions tracked through to completion and reported back to customers.
- Ensuring consistent case recording and categorization (including correct distinction between formal complaints and other types of customer contact) as the unified PSH process embeds across all areas.

Next Steps

The Board and the Members Responsible for Complaints will maintain oversight of improvement and action plans across all legacy areas. Lessons learned from complaints will be used to drive service improvements across operations, including through the developing Customer Experience team model and the PPM transition. Progress will be monitored through regular reporting, and the customer voice will continue to be central in shaping services.

Every complaint matters. Each represents an opportunity to put things right, learn and improve. The Board remains committed to ensuring complaint handling is a key area of governance and accountability as PSH continues to bring together the best of both legacy organisations.

Approved by, and signed on behalf of, the Board by Jayne Francis-Ward (Chair).

Date: 21 September 2026

