

## MALDON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

### **Complaint Handling and Performance Improvement report: April 2023 – March 2024**

Maldon Housing Association Ltd is designated Supported Housing, accommodating older people aged 60+ with a connection to the town in three properties comprising a total of 57 flats.

The Supported Housing Manager is responsible for a team of support staff who are on duty each morning Monday – Friday. They have direct contact with residents, checking the welfare of those who request this either by going to the individual's flat or by telephone each morning. External personal care is arranged in conjunction with the resident and their family. Support staff assist in making such arrangements, especially for those with no family. Coffee mornings are held in each property at least once a week, staff attending and chatting with residents, ensuring the well-being of all.

As the support staff have such face-to-face contact with residents, a resident often discusses with the member of staff in the residence anything that is worrying him/her. In this way, anything that needs further attention is at once referred to the Supported Housing Manager, the Facilities Manager or the Finance Manager, as appropriate, to be dealt with swiftly. Because of this interaction between support staff and residents matters do not escalate; no complaints were made during the last year 2023 – 24.

A member of the support staff is allocated to each house for a period of some months; staff are then rotated so that each works in every house in turn. This ensures consistency in approach across the support team in all the residences. It enables staff to engage with all residents in due course. We are mindful of the effect of keeping the same support staff member working in the same house for a significant time. Certainly this enables the staff to recognize when something is amiss with a resident when making the morning welfare check. Furthermore a resident gains trust in the staff member as they become familiar with that person, giving the confidence to express any anxieties or dissatisfaction. However, that can result in undue reliance upon one particular member of the support team, so eroding a resident's independence. The managers listen to residents' views, weighing the benefits and disadvantages of staff rotation.

Residents are invited to engage with staff at every opportunity. Aside from welfare checks and coffee mornings, staff encourage socializing and try to ensure that no resident becomes isolated. Residents' views are invited in general meetings as a Residents' Forum is held quarterly, staff and trustees attending and listening to any matters raised. No complaints were made at these meetings during 2023 – 24 as reasonable discussions took place, making sure that residents were properly informed and their views taken into account.

Managers and staff are mindful of the need to avoid complacency and the assumption that all operations are working well since no complaints were received during 2023 – 24. A point for improvement lies in the way in which changes are introduced to individual residents. This became evident as the Association adopted a cohesive IT system that handles the process of effecting repairs in a flat from initial reporting by a resident to completion by the handyman/contractor to invoicing the Association. Some residents are experienced in using a computer and can maintain independence using a system to arrange appointments for a repair or maintenance work in their own flat. However, more elderly and vulnerable residents responded with anxiety as they thought that they would be expected to deal with reporting repairs themselves in a way they could not comprehend. They needed much reassurance that this was not the case at all.

To allay fears and forestall potential complaints, care must be taken in informing residents of change.

Whilst use of IT by residents is increasing and provision for advances in this in the coming years is a matter being addressed by the Board of Trustees, communication with vulnerable residents must be according to individual needs.

**Mr R. Keeble, Supported Housing Manager, has been designated Complaints Officer for the Association.**