



ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

April 2025 – March 2026

Introduction

The Great Hospital sits on a 7-acre site in the centre of Norwich, providing homes for over 100 residents aged over 60 and is a registered provider of social housing. It has some 15 listed buildings and other heritage structures and is considered to be one of the most important groupings of heritage buildings in the UK. Resident accommodation is provided in a mixture of heritage and purpose-built modern housing.

As a registered charity, the stated charitable objectives are “the provision and maintenance in the city of Norwich of the parish church of St Helen and of the Almshouses known as the Great Hospital”. In essence this requires the Trustees to protect and conserve the properties, some of which may be used to house residents. Different aspects of the work of the Great Hospital are regulated by two external statutory bodies, the Charity Commission and the Regulator of Social Housing. In addition, Historic England has formal oversight of the management of the heritage buildings which are of national and international significance. The Great Hospital is also a member of the Almshouse Association.

In May 2024, the Great Hospital implemented significant changes to the services offered to residents, investing over £250k in a completely new personal alarm, door entry and smoke detection system installed in every building on the 7-acre site, together with over £60k in new fire doors for residential accommodation and communal areas. Throughout this reporting year, these systems have continued to operate as intended, and we have kept both their day-to-day management and residents’ experience of them under regular review.

In November 2024 the Great Hospital appointed a conservation accredited engineer to oversee an extensive period of works to develop a formal Masterplan, including topographical, drainage, drone and condition surveys. This work has continued throughout the current reporting year and remains crucial to enabling the charity to understand, manage and deliver a sustainable, affordable programme of repair and maintenance.

We recognise that, in order to provide the best level of housing and support for our residents, we need to collaborate and show openness and transparency in the way we work together. Complaints, compliments and comments are a crucial part of this as they help us to learn what we are doing right, where we can improve and what we need to change.

Our approach to complaints

- ❖ We recognise that complaints can and should be seen in a positive light and can help us to develop and improve our services.
- ❖ Our complaints policy is in alignment with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- ❖ We have always operated an 'open-door' policy, and we intend to keep this approach while, at the same time, enabling a transparent and open complaints process that is effective and fair.
- ❖ We continue to utilise an online maintenance service request system which means all service requests are logged and tracked, providing an audit trail and clear records.
- ❖ We have a detailed Resident Engagement database which provides an audit trail and clear records, as well as assisting staff with complaint investigation.
- ❖ We ensure that new residents are signposted to our complaints policy as well as contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.
- ❖ We have strengthened our understanding of the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code and reviewed our internal processes and staff roles to ensure we are compliant.
- ❖ We take every complaint, comment and piece of feedback seriously, however it is raised. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint, we do not require a resident to use the word 'complaint' before treating their concern as one, and we are conscious that many of our residents feel more comfortable raising a concern informally than through a formal complaints process; our Engagement Team work hard to make it as easy and unintimidating as possible for residents to speak up, so that no concern goes unheard simply because it was never put in writing.
- ❖ Where elements of our service are delivered by third parties, such as our alarm monitoring provider Careium, external contractors supporting our Masterplan surveys, and Fault Fixers for service request logging, we maintain oversight of how those providers handle any complaints or concerns raised by residents, so that responsibility and accountability remain with us throughout.

Complaints Handling Performance

Between April 2025 – March 2026, the Great Hospital received two complaints. Both were investigated, responded to and closed at stage one, with no requirement for a second stage. Neither complaint was referred to the Housing Ombudsman for independent review, and none of the complaints received related to a service request. There were no findings of non-compliance received from the Housing Ombudsman.

The first complaint was raised in January 2025, shortly before this reporting year began. In the interests of full transparency we have included it here rather than allow it to go unreported. It concerned the way a resident felt they had been spoken to by our alarm monitoring provider, Careium, in connection with one of our site access systems. Following investigation, including a review of the relevant call recording, no evidence to support the complaint was identified, and it was closed.

The second complaint was raised in May 2025 by a resident who had been upset by a comment made to them by a representative of the Great Hospital. The matter was resolved through direct discussion between the parties, followed by a written response, and the resident confirmed they were satisfied with the outcome.

Learning and Outcomes

The first complaint, although not upheld, reinforced for us the value of the clear audit trail our systems provide; being able to review the actual call recording gave us confidence in reaching a fair and evidenced conclusion, and we were able to offer the resident that same evidence rather than simply our word. It also served as a reminder that even where a complaint is ultimately not upheld, residents deserve to feel that their concern was taken seriously and investigated properly, not dismissed.

The second complaint highlighted the impact that a single comment, however unintentional, can have on a resident's wellbeing, and the importance of everyone connected with the Great Hospital being mindful of this in their day-to-day contact with residents. Bringing the resident and the representative together for a face-to-face conversation, rather than relying solely on written correspondence, proved to be the most effective way of rebuilding trust quickly, and this is now our preferred approach wherever a complaint concerns a relationship between a resident and a named individual.

More broadly, we remain very conscious that many of our residents, particularly those who have lived within our community for a long time, are reluctant to put a concern in writing or use the word "complaint" at all. We do not take this as a sign that all is well; rather, it places a greater responsibility on us to make sure that every concern raised with us, in whatever form, is treated with the same seriousness as a formal complaint. Our dedicated Engagement Team remain visible and accessible on site every day, and continue to resolve the great majority of issues quickly and informally, but we are equally clear with residents that they will never be discouraged from making a formal complaint if that is what they would prefer. We are also clear that, as per our policy, no resident will be treated unfavourably, or experience any change in the service they receive, as a result of raising a complaint.

Service Requests

We continue to provide an outstanding maintenance service from our own internal maintenance team as well as utilising outside contractors when necessary. Having moved our online Service Request logging system to Fault Fixers in March 2025, this reporting year is the first full year in which the system has been in place, giving us a complete and reliable audit trail of service requests, response times and outcomes going forward.

New residents are made aware of how to report service requests, and our maintenance team are visible and accessible onsite daily. There is an on-call rota which requires a member of staff to attend site in an emergency.

Governing Body Response

This report and the self-assessment were shared with the member responsible for complaints (MRC) in August 2026 and subsequently with the board of Trustees. Their response was as follows:

The Trustees have considered this report alongside the accompanying self-assessment and are satisfied that both of the complaints received in this reporting year were handled promptly, fairly and with genuine care for the residents involved. The board was particularly pleased to see the complaint from earlier in the year included transparently, even though it fell outside the previous reporting period, as this reflects the culture of openness we expect. Trustees are mindful that a low number of formal complaints does not, on its own, mean all is well, and welcome the Senior Management Team's continued efforts, through the Engagement Team and otherwise, to reach residents who may be reluctant to raise concerns formally. The Care Committee will continue to receive regular updates on complaints and resident concerns between now and the full board's quarterly meetings, and the board remains assured that the Great Hospital continues to meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.