

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p><i>An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i></p>	x	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	x	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <p>Guidance taken from Ombudsman complaint handling code regarding GDPR, historic cases and cases where legal proceeding have commenced.</p> <p>Remainder are where other processes are in place within organisation to manage the issue raised to the benefit of the resident. These are outlined within the Complaints Policy.</p>		
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>Residents can make complaints via the access route which best suits them. This is clearly stated in the Complaints Policy which is published on our website.</p>	x	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	x	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	x	
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p> <p>Articles are included in all publications to residents regarding the complaints process and lessons learnt. Signposting in footers of generic letters and emails regarding providing feedback.</p>	x	
3	Complaints team and process		

<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? There is a clear structure in place for the management of complaints. The Governance Team are responsible for co-ordinating the complaints process including logging complaints.</p> <p>There are clearly identified and trained stage 1 and 2 complaint investigating managers within each team. These are documented and reviewed regularly.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? Yes. Our training and coaching seeks to empower complaint investigation managers to focus on resolving the complaint and seeking resolution for the customer.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? Yes. Complaint resolution is understood to be a priority and our training and coaching seeks to empower complaint investigation managers to focus on resolving the complaint and seeking resolution for the customer, working across teams where necessary.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? We have amended our policy in line with the Ombudsman recommendation of a two-stage process. The stage two investigation will involve a Tenant Board Member or a Tenant Panel representative where appropriate. The complainant is involved throughout the investigation.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p>		<p>x</p>
<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? This is clearly outlined in the stage 2 response letter. This information is also included in the policy.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? All correspondence is saved within an individual MS Teams folder, with name and unique reference number.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p>		

	Stage one – 87%		
4	Communication		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p> <p>This is a key element of the investigation process and requirements are clearly outlined in the policy and procedures.</p>	x	
	<p>Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?</p> <p>Yes. Complaint investigation managers are empowered to discuss the resolution the resident is seeking prior to making a final decision. Our policy requires complaint managers to make contact with the resident, as soon as possible, as part of the investigation process and to discuss with them the resolution they are seeking.</p>	x	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	x	
	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p> <p>Yes, our response letters clearly outline the process for escalation</p>	x	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p>87% for 2020/2021</p>		
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p>73% for 2020/2021</p>		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one – 98% Stage one (with extension) - 92% • Stage two – 100% Stage two (with extension) – 100% 		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>Where appropriate extensions to timescale are agreed with the resident, for example if further time is required to seek a resolution such as involvement of a third party. Discussion is held with the resident regarding the reason for extension.</p>	x	
	Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the resident informed?	x	

	Extensions are agreed with resident.		
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p>87% of complaints were resolved at stage 1 in 2020/2021. Although it is not directly mentioned within the Ombudsman code, we are looking at measures to monitor customer satisfaction regarding complaints as outlined in the recent White Paper.</p>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	x	
	Where the timescale was extended, did we keep the Ombudsman informed?		
	N/A		
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p>Yes, provided consent is given to discuss matters with a third party. Tenant representation is offered as part of all stage 2 complaint investigations.</p>	x	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	x	
	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>One (Stage 2 to Stage 3)</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p>The complaint had been fully investigated by GCH and it was agreed that an additional stage of review would delay independent review of the complaint by the Housing Ombudsman. The customer was provided with all of the information required to enable them to submit their complaint formally to the Housing Ombudsman.</p>		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	x	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>We have a learnings tracker in place to formally record all learnings from complaints and allocate actions as appropriate. Complaint investigation managers and/or other relevant managers, are responsible for updating the tracker to evidence how lessons learnt actions have been implemented.</p>	x	

	This is reported to Tenant Panel biennially for review.		
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>We have a learnings action tracker in place to monitor this which covers many areas of the business.</p> <p>Examples of learnings include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worked with Contracts Manager and Regional Manager of one of our major suppliers to write a policy re. contacting tenants if they cannot fulfil appointments. - An all-contractor email was issued to remind them they must adhere to the Risk Assessment process and also embrace the Govt COVID 19 guidance. - Increased frequency of audits (of contractors and staff) carried out by Property Care supervisors and the audits are monitored to ensure compliance. - Review of call-handling with feedback provided re. how the call could have been handled differently to provide a more positive customer experience. - Centralised Project voids and regular voids in a single team with sole accountability for void performance, application of the void standard, and management of the process. - Closer monitoring of Cleaning service incorporating standards, quality, VFM. - Surveys centralised through a single surveyor with requests going onto CRM for the Asset Team and allocated via a gatekeeper. - Contractor asked to undertake a toolbox talk regarding language used as some words used (e.g. 'love') may be a trigger for some residents. <p>Further details are published on our website.</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? <i>Via our website, tenant publications and annual report</i></p> <p>b) the board/governing body? <i>Annual complaints report</i></p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? <i>A detailed complaints article is included in each annual report</i></p> <p>The Tenant Panel also receive a monthly complaint report which outlines complaints received and associated learnings.</p>		

	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>All changes were implemented following publication of the code no further changes have been made during 2020/2021.</p>		x
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>N/A</p>		