

# 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>	✓	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	✓	
	<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.</p>	✓	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	✓	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p>	✓	
	<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>	✓	

3	Complaints team and process		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p>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>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p> <p>Our training and coaching seeks to empower complaint investigation managers to focus on resolving the complaint and doing the right thing for the customer.</p>	✓	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> <p>Yes. All staff have received training on the complaints policy and procedure and understand the importance of adhering to them. Complaint managers are able to work across teams to gain information when required as part of complaint investigations. This is also included as a requirement within the complaint procedures.</p> <p>Where a complaint manager requests action to resolve a complaint or to implement continuous improvement, they have the authority to ensure this is delivered.</p>		
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>We have amended our policy in line with the Ombudsman recommendation of a two-stage process.</p> <p>The stage two investigation will involve a Tenant Board Member or a Tenant Panel representative where appropriate.</p> <p>The complainant is involved throughout the investigation.</p>		✓
	<p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p>		✓
	<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p> <p>This is clearly outlined in the stage 2 response letter. This information is also included in the policy.</p>	✓	
	<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?</p> <p>All correspondence is saved within an individual MS Teams folder, with name and unique reference number.</p>	✓	

	At what stage are most complaints resolved?  Stage one – 90%		
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?  This is a key element of the investigation process and requirements are clearly outlined in the policy and procedures.	✓	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? 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 part of the investigation process and to discuss with them the resolution they are seeking.	✓	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?  Yes, our standard response letters clearly outline the process for escalation.	✓	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 90% for 2019/2020		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 56% for 2019/2020		
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? Figures provided for 2019/2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one 97.3% Stage one (with extension) 94%</li> <li>• Stage two 75% Stage two (with extension) 100%</li> </ul>		
	Where timescales have been extended did, we have good reason?  Where appropriate extensions to timescale are agreed with the resident where 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.	✓	
	Where timescales have been extended did, we keep the resident informed?  Extensions are agreed with resident.	✓	

	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p>90% of complaints were resolved at stage 1 in 2019/2020. 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>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	✓	
	N/A in 2019/2020		
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓	
	Yes, provided consent is given to discuss matters with a third party.		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?		
	None		
	What was the reason for the refusal? N/A		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident? N/A		
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	✓	
	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.		
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		
	We have a learnings action tracker in place to monitor this which covers many areas of the business.		
	Examples of learnings include: -		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of complaint response letters</li> <li>• Team briefing sessions regarding customer service</li> <li>• Amended rent statement to clearly show "balance as at" date</li> <li>• Changing the procedure around home safety checks to include boiler testing</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a case management approach with more complex complaints or complaints that cross over service area</li> <li>• Review of the Compensation Policy to make explicit that tenants can choose between work being carried out of a cash value</li> <li>• Review of the Tenancy Handbook to ensure it clearly sets out tenant rights and responsibilities (and GCH's)</li> </ul> <p>Further details are published on our website.</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? Via our website and annual report</p> <p>b) the board/governing body? Annual complaints report</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? A detailed complaints article is included in each annual report.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel also receive a monthly complaint report which outlines complaint received and associated learnings.</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We have moved from a 3 stage to a 2 stage complaints process.</p> <p>We have undertaken a review of our policy, procedures, and letters to ensure they meet the requirements of the code. Letters have been amended to ensure they are easy to understand and less formal.</p> <p>We have amended timescales within complaints process to align with the code.</p> <p>We have reviewed how we publicise our complaints policy and included information more widely in our publications.</p>		