

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 24.12.20

This Self-Assessment is based on complaints data for the last financial year: Sept 2019-Oct 2020

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code				
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments / findings / actions
	<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>	✓		
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	✓		
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy • Comparison to Complaints policies in the sector • Comparison to Housing Ombudsman guidance 	✓		

2	Accessibility			
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓		
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓		
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?		✓	<p>We would make reasonable adjustments as requested but need to be explicit in our Complaints Policy.</p> <p>Action We will either develop a Policy or incorporate a statement into our revised complaints policy. By March 2021</p>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓		<p>We hold the complaints procedure on the website and have publicised this in our newsletters from time to time.</p> <p>Action We can make our process even better by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making our full policy available on the website • Providing the complaints policy at sign up/lettings stage • Providing the complaints policy and procedure/ leaflet to each complainant following the receipt of their complaint • Making reference to the Complaints Policy and Procedure as standard in the newsletters
3	Complaints team and process			
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓		

	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		✓	<p>We have a Complaints Coordinator which is assimilated within the Executive Assistant role. This role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sends out acknowledgements of complaints received • Logs complaints on the system • Sends out satisfaction surveys <p>Downloads performance information and presents a report on a monthly and quarterly basis</p>
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		✓	<p>Complaints Coordinator assigns the complaint to the relevant complaint handler (manager/director) to investigate and respond to the complainant. It is the complaint handler who has the authority to compel engagement from other departments as required. This will be emphasised in the revised Policy - By end March 2021</p>
	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		✓	<p>Residents are not currently involved in any complaints process. However, we are currently reviewing our complaints policy and its stages - By March 2021</p> <p>Alongside this we will consider how residents can be more involved in reviewing our complaints practices and compliance with process.</p>
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	✓		
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	✓		
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓		

	At what stage are most complaints resolved? Response: Stage One			
4	Communication			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	✓		
	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>Complaint handler provides the customer with an outcome of their complaint. Customer can then challenge within 28 days of the receipt of the outcome decision.</p> <p>The outcome is not routinely provided prior to the formal outcome being issued.</p> <p>Action The revised Complaints Policy will include a mechanism to give residents opportunity to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision.</p> <p>By March 2021</p>
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓		
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? Response: 86% were resolved at Stage One			
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? Response: 11% were resolved at Stage Two			

	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one – Response: 15% of Stage one Stage one (with extension) – Response: 11% of Stage one • Stage two – Response: 22% of Stage two Stage two (with extension) – Response: 22% of Stage two 			<p>This is an area that requires improvement.</p> <p>Action Improved monitoring of timescales for responses. Reiterate the both the importance of timescales and communicating delays to complaint handlers. By March 2021</p>
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?		✓	<p>Not clearly documented.</p> <p>Action Explore feasibility of adding this field to Castleton database</p>
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	✓		
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p>Response: Data is not available as satisfaction surveys have not been returned.</p> <p>However, the fact that only a small number of cases escalate to stage 2 indicate some level of satisfaction.</p>			<p>Action Greater oversight of this activity is needed, going forward. Review surveying approach and methodology.</p> <p>By March 2021</p>
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service			
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓		
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A		
6	Fairness in complaint handling			
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓		

	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate? Response: None</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal? Response: N/A</p>			
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A	N/A	
7	Outcomes and remedies			
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p>	✓		<p>Complaint outcomes show that we are committing to putting things right.</p> <p>Action However, lessons learned process needs improvement and impact of learning needs to be captured. By March 2021</p>
8	Continuous learning and improvement			
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased level of monitoring of multiple email inboxes across asset management and neighbourhood operations • Applied reasonable timescales to comply with Tort of Goods 			
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? Response: Some complaint handlers identify lessons learned and share these with the complainant, however this is inconsistent.</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p>			<p>Action: Strengthen the requirement for complaint handlers identify lessons learned and share these with the complainant in the revised policy and procedure. By March 2021</p>

	<p>Response: Director of Housing and Support reports lessons learned to Executive on a Monthly and Board on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? Response: Annual Report in 2019/20 will feature lessons learned.</p>			
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>Response: We are currently reviewing our approach to managing complaints and are using the Code to improve our Policy, Procedure and methodology as well as the experience of our customers.</p>	✓		
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>Response: A number of changes are in progress to be completed by Q2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed telephony system – due to be implemented March 2021 • Planned review of current Complaints policy by March 2021 • Planned review of Customer Standards by March 2021 • Focused review of performance data for internal reporting purposes by March 2021 • Focused review of lessons learned, and impact following a change in practice and embed learning culture across operations by March 2021 • Review of shared/ team email inboxes - by March 2021 			