

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

In September 2020, the Housing Ombudsman launched the Complaints Handling Code. Compliance with the code forms part of our member obligations as a Registered Social Landlord for Foundation.

The code aims:

Operational staff - the Code supports excellent complaint handling and engagement with the Ombudsman. If the requirements of the Code cannot be delivered this should prompt discussion about what needs to change.

Chief executives and senior managers – the Code supports learning from complaints and promotes the open and transparent use of information to assess performance and risks.

Boards - the Code supports culture setting and intelligence for assurance exercises, using complaint data alongside other management information on stock, services and customer feedback to provide insight into their organisation. It is important for governance to understand the complaints their organisations are receiving and the impact of their complaint handling on residents.

Residents - the Code will act as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.

To evidence our compliance, we were required to complete a self-assessment by the 31st December 2020. Sharing our results with our board, on our website and other social media channels.

As of the 31st March 2021, we have updated our self-assessment as below.

Key:

Green: Compliant/Completed

Amber: To Action

Grey: Not applicable at this stage

Completed Self-Assessment Form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? <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>	Yes	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?		No but this means we are compliant
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	N/A	N/A
2	Accessibility	Yes	No
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process	Yes	No
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	
	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	Yes	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes	

	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A
4	Communication	Yes	No
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes	
	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	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) <i>Timescales to be implemented by 31/03/21 and reported on following this date.</i>	N/A	N/A
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction <i>We have only started reporting on stages from 01/11/20 so no data available yet.</i>	N/A	N/A

5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	N/A	N/A
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	N/A
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	N/A	N/A
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	N/A	N/A
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A	N/A
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>Not applicable as only made changes to policy and procedure November</i>	N/A	N/A
	How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? Implemented: Annual Review to include You Said We Did based on the Lessons b) the board/governing body? Implemented: reported quarterly via Operations and Development Sub-Committee c) In the Annual Report? Implemented: reported in 20/21 Annual Report	Yes	
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes	
	What changes have we made? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated complaint definition to universal Housing Ombudsmen definition Published current feedback policy and procedure on our websites Updated response timeframes of '<i>All complaints will be completed within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint</i>' in line with the Housing Ombudsmen Included the Housing Ombudsmen in the client leaflet and complaints publications Published Information For All Policy on our websites 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Board implementation in progress • Quarterly board Complaint report • 6-month audit schedule of the self-assessment • Updated Self-Assessment as of the 31st March 2021 published on our website 		
	<p>Actions we need take once we have prepared the reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21-22 'You Said We Did' shared with residents bi-annually (June and December). These to be published in Services, Website and Social Media etc. • 20-21 Annual Review to include stats on complaints as above including achieved timescales, improvements made and lessons learnt inc. 'You Said We Did' 		