

# 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><b>The customer feedback process encompasses tenant and non-tenant compliments, comments and complaints. As such, reference to “residents” is not appropriate as customers may be tenants, resident in the district, visitors or people carrying out business in the district.</b></p>		<b>x</b>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	<b>x</b>	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon  <b><i>Exclusions are mainly where there is another avenue of appeal or where the case has already been investigated through our process, and the next stage of appeal is to the Ombudsman.</i></b>  <b><i>The policy and procedure and all supporting training emphasise that each customer is an individual with individual needs and circumstances, and that reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure a fair and reasonable approach in all cases.</i></b></p>	<b>x</b>	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<b>x</b>	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	<b>x</b>	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? <b>See answer to Q1 above</b>		<b>x</b>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? <b>Information on how to complain is in the tenant handbook and on our website. If customers are dissatisfied we offer them the opportunity to resolve the issue, via a formal</b>	<b>x</b>	

	<b>complaint if appropriate. We will soon be launching an updated policy and process and will publicise the changes.</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <b>There is a small team which deals with the admin of the customer feedback policy and process across the Council</b>	<b>x</b>	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? <b>Most complaints are best resolved within service teams as that is where the expertise lies. The admin team will liaise with service teams to identify where a complaint can be better dealt with via our early resolution process rather than via the formal process.</b>		<b>x</b>
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? <b>If the relevant officers do not engage with the process, then the customer feedback team are able to escalate up the relevant department's management chain.</b>	<b>x</b>	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	<b>N/A</b>	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	<b>N/A</b>	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	<b>x</b>	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	<b>x</b>	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? <b>We do not currently record complaints which are resolved at first point of contact, so it is impossible to say whether most complaints are resolved via our own early resolution process or at stage 1 of our complaint process.</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	<b>x</b>	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	<b>x</b>	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? <b>In almost all circumstances. There may be instances in exceptionally busy periods where this is not the case.</b>	<b>x</b>	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	<b>x</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <b>Corporately – 88%, council housing team – 81%*</b> <b>*all figures based on 2019/20 stats</b>		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <b>Corporately - 71%, council housing team – 78% (this is the proportion of stage 2 complaints where the customer does not go on to raise a complaint with the Ombudsman)</b>		
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul> <p><b>We don't currently keep statistics on this information</b></p>		
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? <b>(no stats but this is part of our policy/ process)</b>	x	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? <b>(no stats but this is part of our policy/ process)</b>	x	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction <b>Corporately - 96%, council housing team – 96% (proportion of complaints closed at stage 1 or stage 2 and not taken further)</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? <b>We don't keep statistics on this information</b>		
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? <b>We don't keep statistics on this information but always endeavour to keep the Ombudsman informed if it's going to take us longer to respond than originally anticipated</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	x	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	x	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? <b>We don't currently keep statistics on this information</b>  What was the reason for the refusal? <b>N/A</b>		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	x	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	x	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <b>We currently record learning identified and not improvements made, however our updated policy and procedure which will shortly be implemented identify reporting on improvements made as a key part of the process.</b>		
	How do we share these lessons with:		

	<p>a) Residents?  <b>Currently only in the complaint responses. We are looking at ways of publishing learning from customer feedback</b></p> <p>b) the board/governing body?  <b>Currently not shared formally. Robust reporting on lessons learned and outcomes is part of our new process.</b></p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?  <b>Currently we report only the percentage of complaints where learning has been identified. We are looking to change this.</b></p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>		<p><b>x</b></p>
	<p>What changes have we made?  <b>Our policy is based on Housing Ombudsman and Local Government &amp; Social Care Ombudsman principles of dispute resolution, so the way we respond is defined by these.</b></p>		