

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>	√	
	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> <p>Complaints policy document. This explains what most common elements fall outside of our complaints process and is available online or upon request.</p> <p>Generally, concerns outside of our Complaints Policy would include (but not limited to) matters linked to ASB, Service Charge disputes and general matters of policy. However, residents can complain if they feel we have not followed our own policies in respect of how each element/concern is dealt with. Typically, this would be due to delays or lack of action.</p> <p>When we consider a concern falls outside of our complaints policy, a clear explanation is provided to the resident as to why their concerns fall outside of the complaints policy, and the relevant team would take charge to provide a response/take action in line with principles/policies in place.</p> <p>We consider this the fairest/balanced and reasonable way of dealing with such matters and will invite further comment from the Residents Panels in January 2022.</p>	√	
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? This was reviewed and amended as part of a review completed within the last 12 months following the last self-cert sign off to ensure the policy is more robust.	√	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	√	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	√	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	√	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	√	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? We decided to change from a three to a two stage complaints process in April 2019.	N/A	N/A
	Is any third stage optional for residents? We may consider a follow-on review of the Stage 2 outcome in extreme cases, but for the most part the next stage is for resident to refer their concerns to the Housing Ombudsman Service.		√
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? Referral rights are provided in the Stage 2 response letter.	√	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? Customer Hub (CHUB) SharePoint	√	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? The majority of complaints (64%) are resolved at Stage 1. The above figure calculated by way of determining what percentage of complaints was not escalated to Stage 2.		

4	Communication		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p> <p>Resident receives acknowledgement of complaint which confirms the complaint due date. At both Stage 1 and 2 contact should be made with resident to further understand the concerns and an update on progress should be provided. If a response letter is to be issued late, we should inform resident in good time and provide a revised ETA on the response.</p>	√	
	<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>At both Stage 1 and Stage 2 we will discuss concerns with residents, so we fully understand what the issues are. We always welcome feedback and will complete a follow-on review if considered warranted.</p>	√	
	<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p> <p>We have set the target of acknowledging all complaints within two working days of receiving a complaint. This has been achieved on 100% of all complaints within the last 12 months.</p>	√	
	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p> <p>Both Stage 1 and 2 responses explain how to escalate to the next stage in the process.</p>	√	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved* at stage one?</p> <p>64% of complaints are resolved at Stage 1</p> <p>This has dropped since the last self-cert (Dec 2020) from 73%. We consider this to be a combination of an increase in overall complaint numbers and an informal change of stance with the Ombudsman (and in turn ourselves) to air on the side of caution and only reject escalating complaints to Stage 2 of the process in rare or extreme circumstances.</p> <p>*We have taken "resolved" to mean complaints not escalated to the next step in the complaints process.</p>		

<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved* at stage two?</p> <p>90% of complaints are resolved at Stage 2, a slight drop from 96% in the 12 months prior.</p> <p>*We have taken “resolved” to mean complaints not escalated to the next step in the complaints process.</p>		
<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <p>(01/12/2020 to 30/11/2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one – 1022 Stage one – 78 (issued late) • Stage two – 306 Stage two – 0 (issued late) <p>*93% of Stage 1 responses were issued within timeframe.</p> <p>**100% of Stage 2 responses were issued within timeframe.</p> <p>(Our target is for Stage 1 complaints to be responded to within ten working days and for Stage 2 complaints to be responded to within twenty working days).</p>		
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>We will always provide an explanation as to why an extension is needed. Usually this will be due to obtaining information from a 3rd party, investigating complex issues or obtaining input from multiple teams/people etc.</p>	√	
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p>In the event that we are unable to provide a complaint response on time we will inform the resident, provide a clear reason for the delay, and confirm a new timeframe when we expect to be in a position to issue our response.</p>	√	
<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p>(Based on complaints not escalated to stage 2) 64% of complaints were resolved to residents' satisfaction at Stage 1.</p>		

	(Based on complaints not escalated to the Ombudsman) 90% of complaints were resolved to residents' satisfaction at Stage 2.		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p>*Dispensation/extension granted by Ombudsman due to team size, new working conditions (WFH) and team numbers changing/new team members joining team so the target we were working to was 40 days. We hit this target on 100% of information requests.</p> <p>From 22 October 2021, we reverted to 15 working days. We have also hit this target on 100% of information requests thus far and impressed on teams the importance of maintaining this.</p>		√*
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	√	
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?</p> <p>In the last 12 months we have not refused any Stage 1 to Stage 2 escalations.</p> <p>This is caveated by explaining that in the first instance we may have asked a resident to wait for a Stage 1 response to be provided (Stage 1 was late) and then once the Stage 1 response had been issued reconsidered escalating on the specific merits.</p> <p>Likewise, at times a Stage 1 follow on review and response was suggested and put to the resident. Once this had been issued, we then again considered if an escalation was merited.</p> <p>Additionally, for transparency, it is worth noting that we have refused to log a complaint if it is a topic or issue that falls outside of the complaints process as stated in section 3.3 within our Complaints Policy.</p>		

	<p>This includes matter of policy, Service Charge Disputes, ASB, if an issue is subject to legal action or if the issue reported/complained about did not occur within the last six months.</p>		
	<p>Did we explain our decision to the resident?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Outcomes and remedies</p>		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are, we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Continuous learning and improvement</p>		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>In each quarterly report we provide commentary on this topic and highlight progress and changes implemented. The reports can be located on our website or using the following link;</p> <p>Complaints and compliments Network Homes</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>Our Complaint responses provide feedback on where lessons are to be learnt to ensure we don't make the same mistakes again. Quarterly Complaints Report also provides examples of lessons learnt and you said, we did exercises.</p> <p>The Quarterly reports are uploaded to our website for residents/anyone to review.</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>An update on complaints performance, including lessons learned is reported at every meeting of our Customer Services Committee (Quarterly).</p> <p>We are open and transparent with providing complaints data and providing feedback on lessons learnt following a determinations received from the Ombudsman Service.</p> <p>We have an on-going dialogue with the Ombudsman and provide evidence when requested that we are seeking to learn from mistakes by way of the action points raised for each team(s) as an when an issue has been identified following a determination.</p>		

	<p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>Complaints data, Ombudsman determinations and lessons learnt are disclosed in [the financial statements and annual report to residents]</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	√	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We have sought to ensure that all policy documents are reviewed and updated every 12 months (from every 3 years) to ensure that they are current and in line with guidance and best practise guidance issued.</p> <p>We encourage residents to seek advice from the Ombudsman service in the event they are unsure or would like further guidance outside of that provided by Network Homes.</p> <p>Moving into 2022, we are keen to expand on the existing reporting and self-cert by engaging with our resident panels and asking them what additional questions they would like us to consider when looking at whether we adhere to the complaint handling code, how well our complaints process works and whether residents feel we have listened to their concerns. This additional feedback will help drive additional changes on how we consider, investigate and respond to complainants. It will also help build trust with residents and will inherently mean we are also more transparent.</p>		