

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment form (for the period April to November 2020)

| Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code | | | | |
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| 1 | Definition of a complaint | Yes | No | Commentary and actions taken |
| | <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> | | x | <p>This is the first time there has been a standard definition required by the Ombudsman.</p> <p>The current definition will be replaced by the Ombudsman's standard definition in the new policy.</p> |
| | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | x | | |
| | <p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon:</p> <p>Exclusions are clearly stated in the policy, which was developed in consultation with residents. However the current scope is too wide and some complaints that should have been considered could have been rejected under the current policy.</p> | | x | <p>Exclusions are clearly stated in the current policy which was developed in consultation with residents. The Code requires us to simplify these exclusions and limit them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints over 6 months old - Where legal proceedings are underway - Matters that have already been considered <p>These points will be addressed in the new policy.</p> |
| 2 | Accessibility | | | |

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| | Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? | x | | |
| | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | x | | |
| | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? | x | | |
| | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? | x | | Residents are advised on our website and in communication with them, including resident newsletters. |
| 3 | Complaints team and process | | | |
| | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? | x | | Yes, though this is currently a secondment it will soon be a full-time established post. |
| | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? | | x | Under the current policy, case handlers take ownership of resolving their complaints. |
| | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? | x | | |
| | If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? | | x | |
| | Is any third stage optional for residents? | N/A | | |
| | Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? | x | | |
| | Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? | x | | |
| | At what stage are most complaints resolved? | | | 90% of complaints are resolved at Stage 1 |
| 4 | Communication | | | |

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| Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? | | x | Residents should be updated according to the policy. However, this was not the case for all the complaints during the period. With a full-time Complaints Officer answering all complaints in future, residents will be kept informed. |
| Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? | x | | |
| Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? | x | | |
| Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | x | | |
| What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? | | | 90% of complaints are resolved at Stage 1 |
| What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? | 8% | | 8% of complaints are resolved at stage 2 |
| What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? Proportions are within each stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one: 75% Stage one (with extension): 25% • Stage two: 50% Stage two (with extension): 50% | | | 25% of Stage 1 complaints and 50% of Stage 2 complaints were not responded to within Code timescales, however the current policy does not have a timescale requirement for resolution. Both of these points will be addressed in the new policy and with a full-time Complaints Officer responding to all complaints. |
| Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? | | x | In the majority of cases there was a good reason, including delays to investigation caused by Covid lockdown and problems contacting residents. However, some complaints were not adequately |

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| | | | | addressed by case handlers within these timescales. A full-time Complaints Officer responding to all complaints will address this issue. |
| | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? | | x | Some residents were not adequately informed of timescale extensions. A full-time Complaints Officer responding to all complaints will address this issue. |
| | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction | | | We have not measured resident satisfaction with complaints during the period. However, 90% of complaints were not taken to a second stage, which implies some level of satisfaction. We are working with the Ombudsman and the NHF on ways to measure resident satisfaction with complaints, for which there is currently no fully reliable and accepted method. |
| 5 | Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service | | | |
| | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? | x | | |
| | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | x | | |
| 6 | Fairness in complaint handling | | | |
| | 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? | 0 | | |
| | What was the reason for the refusal? | | | |

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| | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | N/A | | |
| 7 | Outcomes and remedies | | | |
| | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | x | | <p>The Complaints and Resolution Officer follows up individual complaints to check work is being carried out, currently this is informal.</p> <p>In future, complaints will be reviewed quarterly by service areas and a resident complaint panel, and reported to Leadership Team.</p> |
| 8 | Continuous learning and improvement | | | |
| | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? | | | <p>We do not have a full record of learning from complaints. A major lesson from our complaints about repairs has been that we need better repairs contractors, this is one reason for our move to a DPS rather than our previous repairs contractor.</p> <p>Under the new policy, and with a full-time complaints officer and resident complaints panel, learning from complaints will be formally recorded and implemented and reported to Leadership Team.</p> |
| | <p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? In newsletters, our DPS consultation, and in the Resident Annual Report</p> | | | <p>With a full-time Complaints Officer implementing the new policy, and working with a resident complaints panel, learning from complaints will be more transparently reported to residents, the Board and in the Resident Annual Report.</p> |

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| | <p>b) the board/governing body? Changes we are making as a result of resident complaints are reported to the Board</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? The changes we are making are in the Annual Report, although complaints numbers and satisfaction are not currently reported as there has been no requirement to do so.</p> | | | |
| | <p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> | <p>x</p> | | <p>Since the Code's publication we have worked on a new process and policy which addresses the areas where we do not meet current requirements in this self-assessment. This is recommended for the Board to accept today.</p> |
| | <p>What changes have we made?</p> | | | <p>Rewritten the complaints policy, developed a new process, begun work to set up a resident complaints panel and are in the process of recruiting a full-time complaints officer.</p> |