

Housing Ombudsman - Self Assessment

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>Please see Section 1 and 2 of Corporate Complaints Policy attached which quotes:</p> <p>From section 1: “A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, or its representatives, when expectations of any matter being resolved have not been fulfilled.”</p> <p>From section 2: “Complaints from citizens may come from residents, businesses, community groups and other users of our services, or those affected by them. They may be received from complainants directly, or referred on their behalf, by an advocate, solicitor (acting as advocate), Councillors, Chief Executive, the Mayor, Member of Parliament, or other appropriate representative.”</p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p>These are listed in Section 5 of Corporate Complaints Policy attached</p>	Yes	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon – the exclusions in the policy are consistent and relate to advice from the Local Government Ombudsman e.g. in ‘Effective Complaint Handling for local authorities’, in particular in reference to time limits, complaints that are handled by alternative statutory processes, or unreasonable and persistent (vexatious) complaints. The Council also has an Unreasonable Persistent & Vexatious Complaints Policy.</p>	Yes	
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>These are listed in Section 2 of Corporate Complaints Policy attached. They include verbal, written, face to face and online accessibility to raise a complaints.</p>	Yes	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p>In line with the Equality Act 2010 we have incorporated provisions into a number of our policies. Within Section 2 of Corporate Complaints Policy attached “In line with equality legislation, we will provide all reasonable assistance or adjustments to enable a complaint to be made in a fair and equitable way that ensures access in all circumstances. For example, this may</p>	Yes	

	include providing information in alternative formats, assistance in making a complaint, or holding meetings in locations accessible to the person.”		
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? We advise about the process as part of the responses to Housing Reviews. We also plan to increase awareness through other publicity sent to residents including the Annual Rent Statement/Service Charge letters.	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? Our structure includes a Complaints Manager who has responsibility for managing a team of Complaint Officers. The manager is also the Link Contact to the Housing Ombudsman and manages and coordinates all Ombudsman complaints.	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? The Complaints Officers role in all cases is to attempt to resolve all complaints to a satisfactory conclusion for all parties at the first point of contact.	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? Yes and will contact and discuss complaints, outcomes and recommended resolution with departments.	Yes	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	No	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	No	
	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? All complaints are recorded through our case management solution.	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? 94.5% of cases are resolved at Stage 1	1st	
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are sent an initial Acknowledgement, outlining timescales for response • Communication is sent if further information is required from the resident. • Regular updates and apologies sent if there is a delay 	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	

	<p>A written Stage 1 response to a complaint is given to the resident outlining the complaint details, actions taken to investigation and the outcome.</p> <p>The resident can challenge the outcome and details of the investigation and are advised how to do this in the response. If the residents wishes to escalate the complaint then a Stage 2 Review is carried out, led by another independent Complaint Officer who has had no involvement in the case.</p>		
	<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p> <p>Our internal target is to acknowledge and log all enquiries within 2 working days</p>	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 94.5%		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 4.7%		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one – 86.8% <p>Stage one (with extension) not currently measured</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage two – 84.8% <p>Stage two (with extension) not currently measured</p> <p>We currently do not have a separate measure to calculate response times after an extension.</p>		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>We are aware there have been limited examples where the reasons for an extension have not adequately been provided/explained to the complainant and this is being reviewed as part of our learning from our complaints handling.</p>	Yes	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p>We are aware there have been limited examples where we have not kept the resident informed but it is our general practice to do so</p>	Yes	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>72%, from Leaseholders & Tenants Survey 2018</p>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p>In the majority, but not in all cases. This is an identified area of improvement.</p>		No
	<p>Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?</p> <p>In the majority, but not in all cases. This is an area of improvement.</p>		No
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?	Yes	
	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal? N/A</p>	None	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?		

7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Due to complaint feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New complaints case management solution implemented to improve tracking, data and trends analysis of complaints handling • Repairs Service have implemented a new repair management solution to assist with the monitoring of service to improve delivery of service, improve outcomes for residents • New Handy Person Team implemented to prioritise the resolution of repair which have been escalated through the complaints process. • Enhanced process in place for repairs in sheltered accommodation, where there are a higher proportion of vulnerable residents • In order to improve accessibility of Housing Officers (HLOs) for residents as identified through the complaints process, they have been reorganised so that they a more localised presence in the community i.e. surgeries within community buildings • Single point of contact for all Ombudsman cases, co-ordinating with Directors 		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) Residents? In the complaint responses or follow-on actions, Quarterly Reports & Annual updates in the Annual Rent Statement are being considered</p> <p>b) The board/governing body? Corporate Management Team (CMT), Departmental Management Team (DMT) report</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? Yes, reports for the b) feed into an Annual Corporate Report</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>Yes with a greater focus on maintain better lines of communications with residents to ensure they are kept updated on the progress of their complaints.</p> <p>Great emphasis on learning from complaints.</p>	Yes	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We have improved our learning from complaints reporting and feedback.</p> <p>We have changed our complaint case management system (iCasework) to enable us to do this better.</p> <p>Greater emphasis on quality of response in terms of simple language and greater clarity of outcomes.</p>		