

# Our Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2020

Section	The Code Requirement	Yes	No	Comments
1	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>			
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p>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.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint and changes have been made to our policy and procedure.
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Our policy does have exclusions.
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<p>The exclusions listed all have alternate resolution and escalation routes for matters to be addressed.</p> <p>We have reviewed the exclusions and consulted with our involved tenants who confirmed that the exclusions are reasonable and fair.</p>

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2	Accessibility	Yes	No	
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	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		We have updated our policy to include digital methods such as social media into the multiple accessible routes available to make a complaint.
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	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Information about how to make a complaint is online we have also added a link to the policy and procedure on our website.
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	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Our approach is summarised in the Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy. We have published Accessibility Commitments and Equality and Diversity policy which covers all relevant aspects to ensure we consider and provide accessible and inclusive services which meet diverse needs. These documents are referenced in our Policy.
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	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		We promote our complaints process within our offices, online and in the Annual Report to tenants. Information on our complaints process is provided to new tenants as part of sign up. Frontline staff also provide advice and guidance to customers on how to provide feedback and access to the complaints process.
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3	Complaints team and process	Yes	No	
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		A dedicated Housing Officer (Feedback) coordinates and deals with complaints and feedback across the business.
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The dedicated officer has a clear remit in having the autonomy to resolve complaints.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The dedicated officer has the authority to compel compliance with the Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy and procedure across the whole business.
	If there is a third stage to the complaints' procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The third stage is a determination by members of the Customer Services Committee, one of which will be a tenant member.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The third stage was agreed with involved tenants in December 2018 and incorporated into a revised policy in February 2019.</p> <p>Further consideration, in conjunction with involved tenants, will be given to making the current third stage optional.</p>
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This is detailed in correspondence after the final determination. The role of the Housing Ombudsman is set out in the Complaints, Compliments and Comments guide.
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		All complaints are held securely within a case management system.
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		First stage.

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4	<b>Communication</b>			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		A dedicated officer acts as liaison to update customers throughout the complaints processes and ensures that response timescales are met.
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Throughout the process there is the opportunity for two-way collaboration to resolve the complaint.
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		All complaints are logged upon receipt, an attempt to contact and open dialogue with resident is made within 2 working days of the initial receipt of the complaint. If contact can't be established an acknowledgement letter will be sent within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint.
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The process is outlined in Complaints, Compliments and Comments guide and details are provided within response letters.
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			96% of complaints resolved at stage 1, 2019/20
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			3% of complaints resolved at stage 2, 2019/20, 1% resolved at Stage 3, 2019/20
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage one</li> </ul>			2019/20 – 98% - 2020/21 to date – 98%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage one (with extension)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage two</li> </ul>			2019/20 – 92% (one complaint response was out of timescale) - 2020/21 to date – 100%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			N/A
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		As a general rule timescales are not extended and therefore extensions/ holding letters are not issued. We endeavour to issue a substantive response to most complaints and, if necessary, provide a follow up letter in 2 weeks.
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		As above.
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?			This information is not currently collected. We will introduce a brief follow up survey for complainants.

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5	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>			
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On 3 occasions timescales were not met.
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		On each occasion.
6	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>			
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Customers are able to authorise a representative to deal with a complaint by providing third party consent.
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Our guide was developed with tenants and our staff are trained to provide advice on our simple and easy to access complaints process.
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?			No cases have been refused escalation.
	What was the reason for the refusal?			Not applicable.
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This would be the case if this arose.
7	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>			
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		We always seek to find solutions within service parameters to meet the individual's needs and circumstances.

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8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No	
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What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?



We have used learnings to update policy, procedures and operational practices. Refreshing knowledge and awareness through training, policy and procedure.

How do we share these lessons with:

- a) residents?
- b) the board/governing body?
- c) In the Annual Report?

Information is shared with involved tenants and the Customer Service Committee via a substantive Quarterly Feedback Report. To all tenants via the Annual Report (although this information is limited).

Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?



We have robust and accessible complaint handling policy and procedure in place. The Housing Ombudsman's Code has provided the opportunity to reflect and self-assess our complaint service and we will strengthen and build upon our existing process.

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What changes have we made?

As a result of the self-assessment we've;

- adopted the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint.
- updated our Complaints policy and procedure
- improved information on our website to include links to our policy and procedure
- consulted with tenants on the reasonableness of complaint exclusions

Whilst we can demonstrate we meet the requirements of the Code, we want to continue to improve our complaints services. To do this we will:

- enhance performance management and reporting of complaints within our governance structure and to our tenants.
- ensure complaints are further promoted as a positive opportunity for learning and improvement.
- improve our communication with customers during the duration of their complaint and make sure they are supported.
- make sure our staff are trained and equipped to recognise and deal with complaints.
- further re-emphasise the authority and autonomy of our dedicated complaints officer in both resolving complaints and receiving positive and timely engagement.
- revisit our policy and procedure to consider the merits of the third stage and whether this should be optional.
- seek feedback from customers on their experience during the complaints process.
- share learning from complaint outcomes, including what changes are made as a result of these, on a quarterly basis with our tenants.
- aim to achieve the Housing Ombudsman's timescales for providing information.