

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code		
1. Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?  <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>	√	
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	√	
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Yes  Evidence relied upon:  <i>Alternative routes available to address issues for the customers using established policies or systems, e.g Whistleblowing, Freedom of Information, Planning appeals, Choice Based Lettings reviews/appeals</i>		
2. Accessibility	Yes	No
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?  <i>We do not have a stand-alone reasonable adjustment policy, instead have recognised the need to make reasonable adjustments as required to reflect the needs of customers and have highlighted this within the council's Equality policy with reference made within the Complaints and Compliments policy.</i>	√	
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	√	
3. Complaints team and process	Yes	No
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?		√
Is any third stage optional for residents?		√
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	√	
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	√	
At what stage are most complaints resolved?  <i>Stage One</i>		
<b>4. Communication</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	√	
Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	√	
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	√	
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	√	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one 83%		
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 17%		
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage one</b> - 100% were responded to during 2019/20 within the council timeframe of 15 working days. In accordance with the Code the timeframe has now been amended to 10 working days. The proportion that would have met this new timeframe within 2019/20 was 50%</li> </ul> <p><b>Stage one</b> (with extension) – No extensions were required during 2019/20 with all meeting the councils 15 working day timeframe. However, if applied to the new code of 10 working days all complaints that required an extension would have met an extension of 5 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage two</b> – 100% were responded to during 2019/20 within the council timeframe of 20 working days. All stage two complaints during 2019/20 would have met the new Code time frame.</li> <li>• <b>Stage two</b> (with extension) – No extensions were required.</li> </ul>		

Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	√	
Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	√	
<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p><i>This is quite subjective in that the resolution of a complaint may be as simple as an apology, arranging for a repair to be undertaken to address a late repair issue or an explanation as to why certain things happen and why certain things cannot be undertaken. The council was successful in providing satisfactory responses to all customer complaints at stage one with the exception of two complainants whose complaints were progressed to stage two. This may indicate that 83% of customers were satisfied following their initial complaint and response with the remaining 17% being satisfied with the outcome when responded to at stage two.</i></p> <p><i>Going forward we will look to develop a method of customer feedback following the completion of the complaints process</i></p>		
<b>5. Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	√	
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? N/A		
<b>6. Fairness in complaint handling</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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><i>None</i></p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p><i>N/A</i></p>		
Did we explain our decision to the resident? N/A		
<b>7. Outcomes and remedies</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	√	
<b>8. Continuous learning and improvement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We have improved information sharing and gathering to ensure that complaints received are addressed using all</i></li> </ul>		

<p><i>available information, including tenant contact to clarify any issue.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We have included complaints outcomes within our partnership arrangement meetings with contractors to ensure our partner organisations are looking internally at their own arrangements to ensure any improvements relating to customer service/care are taken forward.</i></li> </ul>		
<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? – <i>Information is shared through our Tenant Panel as part of our performance monitoring. We will ensure that information specific to complaints handling is included going forward.</i></p> <p>b) the board/governing body? – <i>Information is shared through the council’s Senior Management Team with Council Leaders</i></p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? – <i>Information relating to complaints is included with the Annual Report and we will include, going forward, improvements and changes relating to the Complaints service.</i></p>		
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p><i>Our policy has been updated to take account of the specific definition of a complaint brought in by the Code.</i></p> <p><i>Our policy has been updated to take account of the new response time frames brought in by the Code.</i></p> <p><i>Our internal procedure has been reviewed and cascaded to ensure those responsible for complaint handling are fully aware of the process.</i></p>		