



## 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> <p>Our definition is:</p> <p><i>“an expression of dissatisfaction by telephone, personal visit or in writing, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual or group of customers”</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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. issues relating to employment or application for employment with the Council cannot be addressed through the complaint procedure.</li> <li>2. Complaints that are submitted more than 12 months from the date of the incident.</li> <li>3. Ongoing legal proceedings</li> </ol>	√	
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?	√	
	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?		√
	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?  The figure for 2019/20 showed that 731 Stage 1 complaints were registered and of these 80 escalated to Stage 2. It suggests that 89% of complaints are resolved at Stage 1 but this is not an exact science as we do not have a mechanism to show satisfaction as our system is there to measure response rates.  In relation to Stage 2 complaints, 80 were registered for 2019/20 and none escalated to Stage 3. However, 50 complaints did escalate to the Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2019/20. Please be aware that because of the length of time taken to conclude investigations, the Ombudsman decision will not in many instances match the year that the complaint is concluded in.		
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</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?  Please see my comment under 3.		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?  Please see my comment under 3.		
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one = 86% (152 out of 177 responded to within 10 working days for 2019/20)</li> <li>Stage one (with extension) = 14% (25 out of 177 responded to within 20 working days)</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage two complaint target for this Council is 10 working days = 71% responded to within 10 working days and 94% responded to within 20 working days for 2019/20.</li> </ul> <p>Stage two (with extension) !</p>		
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	√	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	√	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction		
	Please see my response for 3.		
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	√	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	√	
	If we need more time we will request an extension from the Ombudsman before the time for response expires. This is rarely needed.		
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	√	
	Yes but we will need to see appropriate consent from a complainant that we can share information with an advocate/representative.		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	√	
	We believe so but it is difficult to say without undertaking a survey.		
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?		
	In the Corporate complaints procedure we will always offer escalation to the complainant to the next level, whether that is Stages 2, 3 or Ombudsman.		
	What was the reason for the refusal? N/A		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?		
	See above		
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	√	

	We will always offer a remedy where we can and that can be an apology, putting right what has gone wrong and where appropriate financial redress.		
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>For each complaint there is a learning memo that Investigating Officers are asked to complete and this learning is then shared with senior managers when quarterly complaint reports are published.</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>Annual complaint reports are published</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>Annual Complaint Reports are provided for Councillors at Policy Overview Committees and these report are published externally.</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>See above</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>The Council undertook a review of the Council's Corporate complaints procedure and this included consultation with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in developing our policy. We have a greater interaction with the LGO than the Housing Ombudsman Service.</p>		√
	What changes have we made?		