

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE SELF-ASSESSMENT

In July 2020 the Housing Ombudsman Service published a new complaint code which requires all landlords to self-assess and publish the results on their website by 31/12/2020. If there are any areas that do not comply these must be addressed by the start date of the 31/03/2021.

The code is being introduced to standardise complaint handling across the social housing sector as the way we handle complaints vary widely. The aim is for residents to raise complaints easily and for these to be resolved quickly, also for Landlords to learn from complaints and make improvements to their service.

We have set out below our self-assessment against the code.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	Can we Improve?
	<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>	Yes	<p>Policy was reviewed in November 2020</p> <p>We will review further in 2021 to take into account changing proactive especially in relation to Building Safety Complaints</p>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	No	We are aware of the issue of vexatious complaints but will deal with this on a case by case basis
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	Not applicable	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	<p>There are a number of ways how complaints can be raised (Email, letter, phone, in person, through social media, through portal). We can communicate these routes better and will work on this</p>
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	

	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes	BCHG will make reasonable adjustments to the operation of this policy to meet any unique needs of our residents.
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	We can improve here and include in more of our standard communications
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	We have created a new role in 2020 as Head of Customer Voice to champion feedback within BCHG
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	Role reports direct to Deputy Chief Executive
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure, are residents involved in the decision making?	Yes	Tenant Scrutiny Panel act as a Complaint Panel. They have been trained through TPAS and have dealt with one case.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes	Policy explicitly states a resident can bypass TSP and go direct to Ombudsman
	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?	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage 1	We need to improve how we feedback on our responses both direct to resident and to wider customer base
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes	We know we try to so this and it is explicit in the policy but we can improve more. We will check with all residents making a complaint on how our communication was through the 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?	Yes	<p>During investigation a resident is given the opportunity to communicate the outcome sought. There is sharing of information, but this is not consistently done.</p> <p>The opportunity to discuss further BCHG position is offered in correspondence. Requires improvement.</p>
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	99%	Need to publish better data on outcomes
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?		The one escalated above to Stage 2 and offered Stage 3 and remains open.
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?	85%	<p>Since 1 April from receipt to response within 10 working days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one - 85% • Stage one (with extension) - 15% • Stage two – 0% • Stage two (with extension) – 0%
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes	Access arrangement to inspect delayed as tenants shielding. We did have good reason.
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	By telephone and email.
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?	77%	Where comments are offered that tenant was satisfied. Where no comment has been inserted this is taken as a non-positive. Procedure
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		

	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	N/A	No cases escalated to Ombudsman
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
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	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	One	Tenant had refused access for agreed relevant works to be carried out to remedy source of complaint. Challenged about unreasonable behaviour toward neighbour.
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes	Yes, resident subsequently arranged access to allow us to deliver service.
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? •	Yes	We take steps to fix presented problem but need to work harder on underlying cause. Two recent examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent Refund delay – we are now making process change • Staff approach, going through case studies and examining tone of voice and coaching how to best handle scenarios.
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		Internal process change to rent refunds Influenced requirements and outcomes for Staff training – trees, boundary training PPE requirements clarified with Service contractors
	How do we share these lessons with: a) residents?		Tenant Scrutiny Panel co – author feedback report and reference complaints and lesson learning within this.

	<p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p>		<p>Quarterly feedback report to Board highlights root causes and lesson learning</p> <p>Tenant Annual Report reports on lesson learning from complaints</p> <p>Need to publish and update website not updated on lesson learning – ‘You Said, We Did’</p>
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>Yes, clarified points of potential confusion in policy</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Has given greater focus, better guidance and clarity. The start of a shift in culture.</p>
	<p>What changes have we made?</p>		<p>Improving the way we record and monitor complaints.</p> <p>Putting in place complaint handling training for staff.</p> <p>Bringing complaints to the forefront in leadership discussion.</p>

Please click [here](#) to access our Complaint Policy.