

Housing Ombudsman Complaints code - Self Assessment - December 2020

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code	Yes	No	Comments	Improvement required	Further action
1 Definition of a complaint					
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>	Y		New definition added and approved by Exec July 20	N	
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Y			N	
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon			Policy reviewed and approved by Involved residents and VIVID Impact in April 2020	N	
2 Accessibility					
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Y		Accessibility referenced in policy at 4.1	N	
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Y		Policy, procedure and ability to raise complaint all on external website	N	
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Y		We do not have a standalone policy. Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) have confirmed this is not required. Our Equality and Diversity plus Adaptations policies apply as these demonstrate that we give consideration to adapt to accommodate an individual's needs.	Y	Reference to Adaptations Policy plus Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be included in Complaints Policy at review - April 21
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Y		Currently on website & staff advise customers of the process if they have an issue.	Y	Explore further ways of publicising, including highlighting process and relationship with HOS through a link in Quarterly customer e-newsletter
3 Complaints team and process					
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Y		HOS have confirmed there is no requirements for a specific complaint handling team, but for it to be clear who is responsible for complaint handling, for monitoring responses and liaising with the Ombudsman, which is the Research and Insight (R&I) Team.	N	
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Y	N			
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Y	N			
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?			N/A	N	
Is any third stage optional for residents?			N/A	N	
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Y		Resolution templates are embedded within the housing management system with HOS details as standard	N	
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Y		All communications stored within the housing management system	N	
At what stage are most complaints resolved?			Stage 1		
4 Communication					
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Y		Our policy states that we'll provide updates once a week during the investigation, unless less frequent contact is preferred. Audit Data from April- Nov 2020, indicates customer kept informed of any delays in 72% of cases (improvement from 65% - Aug 20) Introduced manager quality checks & highlighted in training	Y	Review and act on results from Managers' quality checks. Continue to promote importance of regular updates in training. Exploring development of auto prompt/ work tray item for staff in housing management system.
Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Y		Outcome calls prior to written resolutions are mandatory, allowing the customer opportunity to respond or challenge. Monthly complaint audits show from April- Nov 2020, 76% of outcome calls were carried out (improvement from 75% - Aug 20). Introduced managers quality checks in Sept 20 for Operations where managers required to audit and promote outcome calls	Y	Review and act on results from Managers' quality checks. Continue to promote importance of outcome calls in training.

Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Y		Internal acknowledgement target is end of next working day. Monthly complaint audits indicate from April- Nov 2020, 82% completed in target (improvement from 75% - Aug 20) Introduced managers quality checks in Sept 20	Y	Review and act on results from Managers' quality checks. Continue to promote importance of acknowledgement calls in training
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Y		All staff should be advising of the escalation steps at the end of each stage and it is detailed in our policy. Frontline: Training has been carried out to ensure the Customer Experience (CEX) Team are aware of their responsibilities under the HOS scheme Stage 1: Resolution templates are embedded within the housing management system with details to contact us if customers remain dissatisfied Stage 2: HOS details included in Stage 2 resolution template	N	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			April - Oct 2020: 96% (57% at Stage 1, 39% at Frontline)	N	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			April - Oct 2020: 4%	N	
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?			Apr - Oct 2020 67%. The timescales in our policy are in line with the code but current practice is to keep cases open until outcomes delivered if requested by the customer. We have now changed our process and this change has been communicated.	Y	Continue to embed new practice and monitor. Develop reporting to regularly report on % resolved within timescales.
· Stage one					
· Stage one (with extension)			33%		
· Stage two			55%		
· Stage two (with extension)			45%		
Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Y		Current practice is to ask the customer if they wish for their complaint to be kept open until complaint resolution, e.g repair work, has been carried out. We have only recently launched new process of closing at 10 days on promise of works.	Y	Assess reasons and process following change in practice
Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Y		Our Policy states we will make contact every 5 days during a complaint, subject to agreement with the customer. Audit Data from April- Nov 2020, indicates customer kept informed of any delays in 72% of cases (improvement from 65% - Aug 20). Introduced managers quality checks in Sept 20 for Operations where managers required to audit and promote regular contact	Y	Review and act on results from Managers' quality checks. Promote importance of regular contact in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 training
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			Two measures: Not escalated to Stage 2 Apr- Oct = 96% . Customers scoring 7 or above for complaint handling Apr-Nov=34%	N	
5 Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service					
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Y		Although one extension was requested during the period April-Nov 20, due to needing longer to prepare the information, we did contact the HOS within the 15 days to agree the extension. Responses currently captured and monitored on a log of all Housing Ombudsman cases.	Y	To ensure accuracy and ease of reporting, Housing management system and reporting to be developed
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Y		Yes - R&I team manage the relationship with the HOS and where deadlines are not met - usually due to inaccessibility of evidence requested- the HOS is kept updated	Y	To ensure accuracy and ease of reporting, Housing management system and reporting to be developed
6 Fairness in complaint handling					
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Y			N	
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Y		Monthly complaint audits measure accuracy and ease of understanding as part of a resolution letter review. Audit data Apr-Nov indicates 89% of letters were of good quality /tone (improvement from 86% - Aug 20)	Y	Continue to deliver monthly audit performance. Review and act on results from Managers' quality checks with all resolution letters required to be reviewed by Ops Leadership team before sending to customer
How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?			10. All under policy ground "solely seeks a resolution that's outside of our control, our policies or is unreasonable"	Y	Reviewing escalation reasons in Complaints Policy to ensure in line with the Code - review at April 2021
Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Y		Decline letters sent with rationale and HOS contact details	N	

7 Outcomes and remedies					
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Y		Action plans in place for all Stage 2 and Ombudsman cases - need to improve monitoring for other stages Compensation captured as part of complaints process. We audit all complaints where compensation has been awarded.	Y	Exploring development of housing management system and reports to capture complaint outcomes to improve monitoring. Review of compensation guidance taking place
8 Continuous learning and improvement					
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			Preventative actions reviewed and discussed at Quarterly Customer feedback sessions to enable learning from complaints and action setting. Some of the changes we've made to improve our services following a complaint include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a different programme to monitor arrears on garages to ensure customers are aware of arrears at an earlier stage, when they're easier to manage. • Reclassifying property sizes and putting a new process in place to ensure accurate information is added to our systems • Developing a new module for an improved Direct Debit System. • Building a knowledge database regarding our Managed Agent properties, to ensure that our staff can give prompt, accurate advice to customers 	Y	New process to learn from complaints and identify improvements currently in development
How do we share these lessons with:					
a) residents?			Currently in an annual article on website	Y	Developing comms for quarterly newsletter/website /media in conjunction with the Comms team
b) the board/governing body?			No current reporting		Proposing to report to Customer Service Committee twice a year.
c) In the Annual Report?			No current reporting		Develop content for annual report 2020/21
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Y				
What changes have we made?			-Introduced additional audits/quality checks, monitoring key elements of complaints practice - Sept 2020 -Reviewed eligibility criteria for escalation to Stage 2 -Amended policy to include standard definition and reviewed accessibility statement -Directing focus on resolving complaints within 10 days, or 20 days dependant on Stage -Provided training to CEX team to increase the % of complaints resolved at front line resolution -Review of how learn we from complaints in progress		

Not a yes or no answer