

## Appendix 3 - Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

**Please note** – the formatting of the table is as provided by the Housing Ombudsman. The Orange cells are where they expect an answer that falls outside of the Yes/No headers at the top of the table.

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>We feel our definition mirrors the nature of the Code, and the wording is clearer and plainer for customers.</p> <p>“We define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with the services we provide or have failed to provide.</p> <p>A customer might contact us to complain about being unhappy because we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• done something badly or wrong</li> <li>• done something we should not have done</li> <li>• failed to do something we should have done</li> <li>• treated them unfairly or without respect</li> <li>• failed to deliver what was promised</li> </ul> <p>And we will treat all as a complaint unless there is a valid reason for us not to.”</p>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?		

	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?  Evidence relied upon		Our reasons are in line with the example reasons given in the Code. Where we decide not to deal with an issue through our complaints process, we give full reasons why.
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	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?		We do not have a specific reasonable adjustments policy, however our complaints policy service standards set out how we will make reasonable adjustments as requested or identified. This includes supporting customers who need help to make their complaint.
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?		
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	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?	N/A	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	N/A	
	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?		Resolve stage. This is local resolution by the subject matter expert or relevant manager within 48 of the complaint being received.
<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?		98% of complaints are managed at our Resolve Stage (data for Feb to Sep 2020, Our new procedure was introduced in February 2020)
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?		2% of complaints are resolved at the Customer Care Escalation stage (data for Feb to Sep 2020, our new procedure was introduced in February 2020)
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>		<b>Resolve Cases</b> All cases raised at the Resolve stage have a target response time of 48 hours, which is under the code targets of 10 and 20 days <b>Customer Care Escalation cases</b> While our aim is ten days, our timescales are agreed with the customers. Our average handling time for 2020 is 19.26 calendar days (note, not working days)

			which would be less). This is still within the 20 day Code target time.
	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		53% of customers are satisfied with the handling of their complaint, up from 24.4% a year ago (12m rolling scores, Viewpoint team survey) Complaint Outcomes February to end August 2019: Upheld - 42% Partially Upheld - 40% Not Upheld - 13% N/A - 6% (not yet closed)
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	All target times or requests have been met. Note - sometimes the HO have given us longer than 15 days.
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?		<b>0 (Zero)</b>

	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?		
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialists to manage complex decant cases</li> <li>• Void process review – resulting in additional time for snagging to be sorted for customers moving in</li> <li>• Communication report and actions cross business</li> <li>• Updated policies and procedures including customer alterations and in progress with disrepair and compensation</li> <li>• How to Documents – including damp and mould</li> <li>• Data Quality project key input</li> </ul>
	How do we share these lessons with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) residents?</li> <li>b) the board/governing body?</li> <li>c) In the Annual Report?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) We set up a new Customer panel this year, which has a Complaints sub group that is working with us to recommend best ways to share lessons with customers</li> <li>b) Six monthly report to the Board</li> <li>c) Quarterly Health and Safety Committee report</li> <li>d) Monthly Insights meeting</li> </ul>
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?		<p>We feel that other than making minor changes to definitions, our Policy and Procedure already mirrored the code. This was validated by an external audit by KPMG in October 2020.</p> <p>We were already on a journey to improve our responses to customer complaints, and look forward to continuing this.</p>

<p>What changes have we made?</p>	<p>The areas highlighted in yellow are the additions to our Complaints Policy from the review of the Code.</p> <p><b>2. Aims and service standards</b></p> <p>In order to achieve our aims we will follow and meet a set of service standards which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving customers clear information about how they can make a complaint. This includes making it easy for them to give us feedback by accepting complaints in a range of ways including in person, by phone, by email, through our customer website, by social media or by letter or form. We will investigate complaints in the same way regardless of what channel a customer uses to report them.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Definitions</b></p> <p>We define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with the services we provide or have failed to provide.</p> <p>A customer might contact us to complain about being unhappy because we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>done something badly or wrong</li> <li>done something we should not have done</li> <li>failed to do something we should have done</li> <li>treated them unfairly or without respect</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• failed to deliver what was promised</li></ul> <p>And we will treat all as a complaint unless there is a valid reason for us not to.</p>
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