

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form 31 December 2020 for Network Homes

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 policy states:</p> <p><i>A complaint is defined as ‘a communication expressing dissatisfaction with the service provided by us and/or our service partners’. This includes complaints about:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a delay in providing a service • a failure to provide a service • a mistake made in the way we provided a service • the failure to act in a proper way • the provision of an unfair service <p>Marked as “no” as it does not use the exact definition. This will be used in an amended Complaints policy due 31 March 2021.</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> <p>Complaints policy document. This explains what most common elements fall outside of our complaints process and is available online or upon request.</p> <p>Generally, concerns outside of our Complaints Policy would include (but not limited to) matters linked to ASB, Service Charge disputes and general matters of policy. However, residents can complain if they feel we have not followed our own policies in respect of how each element/concern is dealt with. Typically, this would be due to delays or lack of action.</p>	√	

	<p>When we consider a concern falls outside of our complaints policy, a clear explanation is provided to the resident as to why their concerns fall outside of the complaints policy, and the relevant team would take charge to provide a response/take action in line with principles/policies in place.</p> <p>We consider this the fairest/balanced and reasonable way of dealing with such matters and will invite further comment from the Residents Panels in January.</p>		
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	√	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	√	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p>We have the basis of a rudimentary reasonable adjustments policy in relation to complaints (10.3 in our Complaints Policy). Will amend to make more robust when completing our next Complaints Policy review due for 31 March 2021.</p>	√	
	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?	√	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>We have opted for a two stage complaints process.</p>	N/A	N/A
	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?	√	
	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p> <p>The majority of complaints (73%) are resolved at Stage 1.</p>		

4	Communication		
	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? Our internal target is to log all complaints within two working days.	√	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	√	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 73% of complaints are resolved at Stage 1 (01 Jan 2020 – 31 Dec 2020)		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 96% of complaints are resolved at Stage 2 (01 Jan 2020 – 31 Dec 2020)		
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one – 759 Stage one – 74 (with extension*) • Stage two – 167 Stage two – 4 (with extension**) <p>*91% of Stage 1 responses (with extension) were issued within agreed extension timeframe.</p> <p>**98% of Stage 2 responses (with extension) were issued within agreed extension timeframe.</p> <p>Our internal target is for Stage 1 complaints to be responded to within ten working days and for Stage 2 complaints to be responded to within twenty working days.</p>		
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? We will always provide an explanation as to why an extension is needed. Usually this will be due to obtaining information from a	√	

	3 rd party, investigating complex issues or obtaining input from multiple teams/people etc.		
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? In the event that we are unable to provide a complaint response we will inform the resident in good time, provide a clear reason for the delay and confirm a new timeframe when we expect to be in a position to issue our response.	√	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction? (Based on complaints not escalated to stage 2) 73% of complaints were resolved to residents' satisfaction at Stage 1. (Based on complaints not escalated to the Ombudsman) 96% of complaints were resolved to residents' satisfaction at Stage 2.		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? *Dispensation/extension granted by Ombudsman due to team size, new working conditions (WFH) and team numbers changing/new team members joining team so the target we are working to is 40 days – which we are 100% compliant with. Agreement still in place although working back down to fall in line with 15 working day timeframe 31 March 2021.		√*
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	√	
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	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? Answer: 2 (less than 1% of complaints raised) What was the reason for the refusal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy regarding ASB • Reasonable redress applied compensation no extra award. 		

	(HOS referral rights provided for both).		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	√	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	√	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>We have promoted an environment to challenge and push for change to improve all aspects which impact our residents lives. This includes (but not limited to) the implementation of feedback tools for all contractors and continuous improvement across all areas within Network Homes. We have also formed a number of teams to focus on better communication with residents and ensuring feedback is acted upon.</p> <p>Following any determination in favour of a resident the Complaints Team has provided a detailed drill down of the determination to ensure that at all stages of the process those involved understand how we could have improved the service provided in an attempt to stop the matter being raised as a complaint. We also focus on all elements post a complaint being logged up to the point of the determination being issued. Again, this is to make sure lessons are learnt as part of a “cradle to grave” holistic review of the specific case/complaint.</p> <p>We have also set up a wider group consisting of ETL/SMT to look at holding regular “lessons to be learnt” sessions. This is in its infancy, but we believe this will add to the above and set sound foundations to embedding learning across Network Homes.</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>Our Complaint responses provide feedback on where lessons are to be learnt to ensure we don’t make the same mistakes again. Quarterly Complaints Report also provides examples of lessons learnt and you said, we did exercises.</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>An update on complaints performance, including lessons learned is reported at every meeting of our Customer Services Committee. We are open and transparent with providing</p>		

<p>complaints data and providing feedback on lessons learnt following a determination against Network Homes.</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>Complaints data, Ombudsman determinations and lessons learnt are disclosed in [the financial statements and annual report to residents]..</p>		
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	√	
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>Network Homes has ensured that residents are able to raise their concerns via all online media – previously residents would be signposted to our complaints team/mailbox.</p> <p>We have made a conscious effort to encourage residents to seek advice from the Ombudsman service in the event they are unsure or would like further guidance outside of that provided by Network Homes.</p> <p>We have updated our Complaints and Compensation Policies to fall in line with the new Complaint Handling Code.</p> <p>We are also to review our Habitual Complainants Policy to ensure it is in line with the spirit of the Complaints Handling Code. This will likely involve members from our Resident Panels or Continuous Improvement groups. Due to be completed 31 March 2021.</p> <p>We are presenting this self-assessment to our Resident Panels in January 2021, when we will also seek their views on how best to closely involve residents in the next self-assessment, due by 31 December 2021.</p>		