

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

| Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code | | | |
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| 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> | Yes | |
| | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | Yes | |
| | <p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services, persons or bodies over which the Group has no control; • Initial requests for service e.g. reporting a repair or where you are telling us about a problem for the first time (unless this relates to staff behaviour); • A claim for damages or personal injury which will be dealt with by our Insurers as an insurance claim; • Attempts to reopen or reconsider a complaint where we have already provided a final decision; • Matters which are, or could reasonably be expected to be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings or which are in the hands of the Group's Insurers; • Complaints arising from the ending of a tenancy as part of the starter tenancy procedures; • Complaints of neighbour nuisance or disputes between neighbours that are dealt through our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policies, unless these complaints relate to how we have dealt with the matter; • Complaints that have not been brought to our attention within six months after the incident - complaints outside of this time though can be considered at the discretion of the Customer Services Manager if there is evidence to suggest it would be unreasonable not to. <p>Exclusions most recently reviewed in 2020 in consultation with involved tenants and Tenant Committee</p> | Yes | |
| 2 | Accessibility | | |
| | <p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>In person, by telephone, in writing, by email via our website and social media</p> | Yes | |

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| | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | Yes | |
| | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? Reasonable Adjustments statement published on website | Yes | |
| | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? Website, customer leaflets, newsletter, Annual Report | Yes | |
| 3 | Complaints team and process | | |
| | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? Customer Feedback Coordinator and Customer Feedback Manager | Yes | |
| | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? The Customer Feedback Team have autonomy to resolve informally to prevent formal escalation and where necessary can offer apologies, goodwill gestures and arrange/organise appropriate action to put things right. | Yes | |
| | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? The Customer Feedback Team refer complaints to the appropriate service manager which is also shared with the Senior Manager at time of referral to encourage early resolution. | Yes | |
| | If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making? | N/A | |
| | Is any third stage optional for residents? Stage 3 removed from policy July 2020 | N/A | |
| | Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? Standard paragraph is added to all Stage 2 responses – 'This stage two response forms the final part of the Group's internal complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied with the response you can either refer the matter to a designated person or wait 8 weeks and refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman directly yourself. Enclosed for you is a leaflet with more details on the options now available to you.' NB WCHG is aware of the forthcoming changes to the 8 week period prior to Ombudsman contact, as outlined in the Social Housing white paper of November 2020 and will update our communications accordingly once this change comes into effect | Yes | |
| | Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? Complaint file for each resident/address with documentation stored managed by Customer Feedback Team. | Yes | |
| | At what stage are most complaints resolved? Based on 2019-2020 data. | 1st | |
| 4 | Communication | | |
| | Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? Through acknowledgement letter/email/telephone call, contact from investigating manager, and interim response (where required). | Yes | |

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| | <p>Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? Contact and discussion is encouraged throughout the complaint process between manager and resident.</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? Within 2 days.</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? Standard final paragraph – Stage 1 If you are not satisfied with this response you can ask for your response to be considered for a review at the next stage of our complaints process. To proceed on that basis you can contact the customer feedback team and talk to them about the reasons why you are unhappy and they can let you know the different options available to you. You can contact them by calling 0800 633 5500 or by emailing complaints&praise@wchg.org.uk or writing to us at the address above. You will need to do this within 28 days of receiving this written response to your complaint.</p> <p>Stage 2 This stage two response forms the final part of the Group’s internal complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied with the response you can either refer the matter to a designated person or wait 8 weeks and refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman directly yourself. Enclosed for you is a leaflet with more details on the options now available to you.</p> <p>NB WCHG is aware of the forthcoming changes to the 8 week period prior to Ombudsman contact, as outlined in the Social Housing white paper of November 2020 and will update our communications accordingly once this change comes into effect</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? Based on 2019-2020 data.</p> | 87% | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? Based on 2019-2020 data.</p> | 97% | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? Based on 2019-2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) <p>119 stage one complaints 2019-20 – 20 extended – 4 over code timescales 15 stage two complaints 2019-20 – 5 extended – 3 over code timescales</p> | 83% 97% 67% 80% | |
| | <p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? Acceptable reasons include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the request of the customer • Waiting for third party information/evidence that is required for the response | Yes | |

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| | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? Where an extension is required, the Customer Feedback Team issues an interim response to the customer. | Yes | |
| | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction | 85% | |
| 5 | Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service | | |
| | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? 3 cases 2019-20 – all information was provided within the required timescales. | Yes | |
| | 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? Based on 2019-2020 data. What was the reason for the refusal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2019-20 (prior to the removal of stage three from our process), the Group refused to escalate 4 complaints from stage two to stage three All 4 of these complaints had received a stage one response and a stage two review. Escalation to stage three was refused due to there being no new information to consider Two of these complaints were then referred by the customer to the Housing Ombudsman | 4 | |
| | Did we explain our decision to the resident? All residents are informed in writing of the reasons for the refusal to escalate and advised of the next steps available to them including designated person and Housing Ombudsman Service. | Yes | |
| 7 | Outcomes and remedies | | |
| | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? These include - acknowledging what has gone wrong, apologising, putting what went wrong right, offering goodwill gestures, agreeing acceptable resolutions with residents, rectifying delays, changing decisions where appropriate | Yes | |
| 8 | Continuous learning and improvement | | |
| | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Based on 2019-2020 data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenancy termination procedure updated to include complex cases; Specification improvements made to new build properties; Improvements made to the exchange process; Improvements made to new kitchen plan survey; Review of the process to remove items from communal areas; | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handling difficult customer training delivered within Customer Services. | | |
| | <p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? Service Review Group, Customer Access Panel, Tenant Committee and website</p> <p>b) the board/governing body? Regular reports to Group Leadership Team and Board</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? Annual Report 2020</p> | | |
| | <p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | |
| | <p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> updated our definition of 'complaint' to use the exact wording used by the Ombudsman published a Reasonable Adjustment Statement strengthened our approach to sharing complaint information and lessons learned information with our residents met with involved residents to test whether they consider the exclusions to the complaints policy to be reasonable and fair devised Complaint Handling Training sessions for Team Leaders and Managers with the content designed around the new Code | | |