

## Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form – Alliance 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>Uses a very similar version of the wording which can be tweaked. Our policy also picks up compliments as well.</p>	x	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p>At the point the policy was written we considered this unnecessary as it may act as a barrier to some feedback not being received.</p>		x
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <p>No exclusions included in the policy</p>	N/A	N/A
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>Yes, and these are listed in the policy</p>	x	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	x	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p>Whilst in practice we make sure we meet the needs of customers – eg: by visiting rather than calling or by working with authorised advocates or support workers we do not have a documented policy on this</p>		x

<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p> <p>Not routinely. We have a section on the website and we give customers the option to complain if they express dissatisfaction on the phone but beyond that no.</p>		
<p><b>3 Complaints team and process</b></p>		
<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p>Phoebe Hunt – Feedback Manager</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	
<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p> <p>Yes but need further clarity on what the boundaries of that autonomy are.</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	
<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> <p>Yes – and this is improving significantly but there is still work to do in this area</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	
<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>There is no third stage in the policy at present and no customer involvement in the decision making process</p>		<p><b>x</b></p>
<p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p> <p>We don't have a third stage or an appeals process as part of the existing policy.</p> <p>Stage 1 is led by the Feedback Manager and if the customer is not happy after this it is investigated at Stage 2 by the service manager.</p> <p>As part of that there is a quality assurance process where another manager will review the outcome of the investigation and then all those complaints passing to this stage are then reviewed at a fortnightly case conference to ensure consistency and fairness.</p>		<p><b>x</b></p>
<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p> <p>Yes – full details including contact details are set out in the policy</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	
<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?</p> <p>Yes – all stored under the complaint case on The Hub and the same will apply when we move to CX</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	

	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p> <p>At the moment it is probably a 50/50 split but we are currently looking at processes to ensure we are picking up all expressions of dissatisfaction, even those which do not result in a complaint and capture those as a comment so that they can all be reported on. This area of complaints management needs to be more accurately reported.</p> <p>Where complaints are multi-faceted managers are involved in the decision making to put things right even if the case is being dealt with by the Feedback Manager.</p>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p> <p>Our policy allows for preferred method of communication and frequency of communication to be led by the resident according to their needs and preferences</p>	<b>x</b>	
	<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?</p> <p>Yes, we have a conversation with the customer to discuss the proposed resolution and if further issues arise from that we look into those before closing the case.</p> <p>Where the customer isn't happy with the proposed resolution these are the cases that come to the case conference for discussion which gives the chance to discuss as a group whether the resolution is fair and reasonable.</p>	<b>x</b>	
	<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p> <p>I am confident they are but our policy doesn't state they will be and there isn't a system in place at present to accurately record this</p>	<b>x</b>	
	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p> <p>If the customer is not happy at the end of Stage 1 the policy sets out that it will go to Stage 2 if we are unable to resolve at Stage 1 but we don't routinely set this out in our written communication.</p>	<b>x</b>	

<p>We do routinely give details of the Housing Ombudsman and when a complaint has gone through Stage 2</p> <p>We also need to routinely consider other recommended course of action such as the Community Trigger</p>		
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p>The information we currently keep isn't sufficiently reliable to measure this accurately</p>		
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p>The information we currently keep isn't sufficiently reliable to measure this accurately</p>		
<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul> <p>We don't currently have set timescales in our policy for each stage which was deliberate with a view to negotiating timescales with customers on an individual basis.</p> <p>Our policy will be updated to include these when it is reviewed.</p>		
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>See above – we work on a principle of negotiating timescales for completion. It is reasonable to conclude that this has led to a number of cases being open for longer that is reasonable particularly when numbers of complaints were high.</p>	<b>x</b>	
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p>Yes, the Feedback Manager agrees form and frequency of communication with each customer.</p>	<b>x</b>	
<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>Given the inaccuracy of our reporting to date it is hard to say but it would be roughly 90%+</p>		

	<p>We have 4-5 frequent complainants who are regularly dissatisfied but we are using other means to support them as they often have a range of issues that require additional support through the complaints process. We support those customers by giving them a single point of contact so that we can build a relationship with them and guide them carefully through the process.</p> <p>Looking at last year's stats (2019-2020) from the Housing Ombudsman our customers raised 16 complaints to the ombudsman, 1 of which resulted in a determination of partial maladministration.</p>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	<b>x</b>	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	<b>x</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	<b>x</b>	
	Yes – it is stated in our policy that an authorised advocate can make a complaint under the policy		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	<b>x</b>	
	Advice on complaints is given through the Feedback Manager largely verbally over the telephone		
	All letters will be reviewed for ease of understanding		
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?		
	We haven't refused to escalate any complaints under this policy		
	What was the reason for the refusal?		
	N/A		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	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>x</b>	
	Yes - We look to send the most appropriate person out to visit the customer and talk to them about what we can do to put things right.		
	Examples of some of things we do:		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the case of a missed or incomplete repair we would seek to put a date in as soon as possible to resolve the issue</li> <li>• If there is a bigger issue that may be structural we commission a report to understand the issue in more detail</li> <li>• If we have damaged a customers goods or property we offer reasonable compensation</li> <li>• If there has been a dispute between neighbours over a communal garden, we offer to work with all parties to seek compromise and use specialist mediation services when appropriate</li> <li>• If we identify additional support needs we have a conversation with the customer and a referral to either our or an external support service depending on what is most appropriate</li> <li>• If we identify a policy issue which is causing a problem we will seek to review this and make changes where practicable</li> </ul>		
<b>8 Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>We are looking at introducing a more formal way of learning lessons to avoid repeat issues occurring. Once the complaint is resolved the Feedback Manager captures the learning and circulates it to relevant managers for action.</p> <p>This has only recently started and we will have a system for recording actions taken.</p> <p>With big multi-faceted complaints we will hold a lessons learned review, starting with a chronology of events and inviting everyone who has been involved in the issue leading up to the complaint and seeking their view on what they did and why they took the action they did working together to look at where the 'breakdowns' happened and identifying things that need to change.</p> <p>These events need to be managed sensitively an appropriately chaired to ensure colleagues don't feel the exercise is one of apportioning blame</p>		
<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p>		

<p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>We need to agree how and with what frequency we share lessons learned with all parties as part of a refresh of the policy and process</p>		
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>Has meant that we are reviewing our policy and approach to ensure we capture all expressions of dissatisfaction, manage complaints in a timely way, learn and embed lessons from complaints and report the outcome of complaints to relevant stakeholders and customers</p> <p>We are also maintaining our tailored approach to ensure we manage every customer's issue in a way that works for them.</p>		
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>Changes proposed and in progress as a result of the code are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tweak the definition of a complaint to match the Housing Ombudsman's definition</li> <li>• Consider adding exclusions to the Policy</li> <li>• Ensure we have reasonable adjustments covered in the Policy</li> <li>• Clarify issue around autonomy for the Feedback Manager</li> <li>• Do we need to split Stage 2 into Stage 2 and 3?</li> <li>• More robust method of recording dissatisfaction by type and stage to ensure it is all captured whilst recognising The Hub is not ideal and we do have an off-system solution, the process in CX needs to be signed off as addressing all the requirements.</li> <li>• Introducing timescales for resolution into the Policy – time taken to log, Stage 1 and Stage 2 (Stage 3 if we put one in)</li> <li>• Review the way we communicate complaints resolution – using customers preferred method and ensuring we always tell them how to escalate</li> <li>• Identify reasons for not escalating and record the number of times and the reason we are doing it</li> <li>• Embedding a lessons learned process and capturing the outcomes from that</li> <li>• Introducing case reviews, starting with complex cases</li> </ul>		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finalise reporting dashboard, capturing of lessons learned and case studies</li><li>• Agree frequency of reporting to customers and others eg: Board</li><li>• Agree how best to advise customers of the ability to express feedback – website, social media etc.</li><li>• Undertake an insight exercise with customers who have been through the process to inform the changes required.</li></ul>		
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