

**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form**

**Newark and Sherwood District Council – Review December 2021**

<b>Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	<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><b>Yes.</b> Section 3.3 of the Policy</p>	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> Section 2.2 of the Policy</p>	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>Service requests are actioned by Customer Services All Policies are on the website and officers can offer verbal explanation</p>	

		<p>Statutory appeals in place, e.g. judicial review of decision for homelessness or allocations</p> <p>Cllr related complaints have an alternative route</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<p><b>Yes.</b> Section 4.3 of the Policy</p>	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	<p><b>Yes.</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/customerfeedback/">https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/customerfeedback/</a></p> <p>Tenant feedback indicates the policy is hard to find and suggest it is renamed from 'Customer Feedback Policy' to a more obvious title of "Complaints and Compliment Policy"</p>	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Draft policy out to consultation	

		For approval at January 2022 committee cycle	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	<p><b>Yes.</b> The Customer Feedback Policy is on the website</p> <p>Reports to Tenant's Forum on a quarterly basis</p> <p>Creating a communications plan to promote it to tenants</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?		<p><b>No.</b> There is a single point of access for all complaints; Complaints are logged by the customer services team leaders on to corporate Customer Relations Management software Customer Services Team Leader.</p> <p>The complaints are circulated to the relevant manager for action</p>

	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		<b>No.</b> The relevant manager has autonomy to resolve complaints
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		<b>No.</b> The complaint is managed wholly by the relevant manager who will have the authority to compel engagement
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman does not believe a third stage is necessary as part of a complaints process but if a landlord believes strongly it requires one the reasons why should be detailed in the self-assessment.</p>		<b>No</b> Third stage was removed in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		<b>No.</b> Third stage was removed in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	<b>Yes.</b> Suite of template letters are in place.	

		<p>There is a link on the website Councils website to this</p> <p><a href="https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/">https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/</a></p>	
	<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b></p> <p>All complaints are managed through the corporate CRM system and associated correspondence is kept electronically within this system in line with the Councils retention policy.</p>	
	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b></p>	
	<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><b>Yes.</b></p> <p>Colleagues dealing with the complaint have the option to contact the complainant for discussion</p>	

		<p>This could be described as the escalation from stage 1 to stage 2</p> <p>For stage 2 complaints there is an option for the tenant to involve a tenant representative.</p> <p>The initial acknowledgment letter or email has the main Council details on it.</p> <p>Any future correspondence should have the contact details of the officer who is dealing with the complaint.</p>	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	<b>Yes.</b>	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	<b>Yes.</b> Suite of template letters are in place	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	95%	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	5%	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one</li> <li>• Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two</li> </ul>	<p>Stage 1 – 82%</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Stage 2 – 100%</p>	

	Stage two (with extension)	N/A	
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	<b>Yes.</b>	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	<b>Yes.</b> Holding letters are always sent	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	60%	
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	<b>Yes.</b>	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	No recent cases	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	<b>Yes.</b>	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	<b>Yes.</b> Quality checks are carried out and tabled at Directorate meetings across the Council	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	<b>None.</b>	
	What was the reason for the refusal?	<b>N/A</b>	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	<b>N/A</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	<b>Yes</b>	

		<p>1. Performance reporting with learning tabled at Housing Directorate meeting</p> <p>2. Development of Compensation Policy</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	<p>Review and enhancement of Fit To Let standard</p> <p>Review and bringing back in-house of Grounds Maintenance Contract</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>Performance reporting with learning is tabled at Housing Directorate meeting and forms part of the Committee cycle of performance monitoring report.</p> <p>The committee reports are available to tenants, and the quarterly report is shared with involved tenants.</p> <p>There is a section in the AR relating to complaints</p>	
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Complaint handling has historically been satisfactory, however the code has prompted a review of our Policy and processes.	
	What changes have we made?	<p>Inclusion of option for tenant representative at Stage 2.</p> <p>Production of Reasonable Adjustment Policy</p> <p>Production of Suite of Letter Templates</p>	



		<p>Production of a Compensation Policy Review of Vexatious Policy Performance reporting at Housing Directorate Meeting Elevated priority and awareness of complaint handling amongst managers and teams; the importance of receiving feedback to promote service improvements and learning. Internal Complaint Handling training.</p>
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