

## Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form Newark and Sherwood District Council – December 2020

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><b>Partial.</b></p> <p><b>Section 3.3 of the Policy – the full definition to be included in the Policy</b></p>	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b></p> <p><b>Section 2.2 of the Policy</b></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>	

		Statutory appeals in place, e.g. judicial review of decision for homelessness or allocations  Cllr related complaints have an alternative route	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<b>Yes.</b> <b>Section 4.3 of the Policy</b>	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	<b>Yes</b>	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?		<b>No</b> Approval requested at Homes & Communities Committee on 18 January 2021
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?		<b>No</b> This will be put in place going forward as part of a wider communications plan
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?		<b>No</b> There is a single point of access for all complaints; Meritec, and these are

			logged by Customer Services Team Leader. The complaints are circulated to the relevant manager for action
	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>	<p><b>Partial compliance</b> For Council tenants access to tenant panel at 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage. This has since been reviewed and an alternative approach will be considered by Homes &amp; Communities Committee on 18 January 2021</p>	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		<b>No</b> Council tenants only. There is a choice in the

			Policy for tenants to access this 3 <sup>rd</sup> stage or progress direct to the Ombudsman.
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?		<b>No</b> Suite of templates being progressed and the right to refer process is included
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	<b>Yes</b>	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage 1	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	<b>Yes</b>	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	<b>Partial compliance.</b> This could be described as the escalation from stage 1 to stage 2	
	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>No</b> Suite of templates being progressed and the escalation process is included

	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	<b>93%</b> (2019/20 Data)	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	<b>7%</b> (2019/20 Data)	
	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>		This data is not currently collected but new reports are being created
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?		This data is not currently collected but new reports are being created
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?		This data is not currently collected but new reports are being created
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction		This data is not currently collected but new reports are being created
<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?	<b>Data not available</b> 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>	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	<b>None</b>	

	What was the reason for the refusal?	N/A	
	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?		The learning and remedial actions following things going wrong is identified as an area for improvement
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	Review of Fit To Let standard Review of Grounds Maintenance Contract	
	How do we share these lessons with:  a) residents?  b) the board/governing body?  c) In the Annual Report?		This is not currently done at a corporate level but recommendations for future sharing are: SLT, residents and tenants via the website, the Housing Advisory Group and Homes & Communities Committee

	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>Data not available yet but we are confident adhering to the code will improve complaint handling at the Council.</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p>	<p>Inclusion of a 3<sup>rd</sup> stage for tenants by escalation to Tenant Panel</p> <p>Procedure has been reviewed to take into consideration this code and the revised Local Government Ombudsman guidance</p>	