

Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment

We've recently had to assess our complaints handling procedure in line with the new code of practice set out by the Housing Ombudsman. The code is part of the Ombudsman's new powers in the revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme. The key areas we have been assessed on are as follows:

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- The structure of the complaints procedure - only two stages necessary and clear timeframes set out for responses
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in Annual Reports.

The summary below shows whether we've met the criteria in those areas. If you want to discuss the full report and findings please get in touch with our [Customer Feedback team](#). You can also find out a bit more about our complaints handling procedure in this [year's annual report](#) webpages.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? <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>	Yes	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon An Equality Impact Assessment on the new Complaints procedure has been completed.	Yes	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? The requirement in our Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all policies, projects and processes means that we proactively make reasonable adjustments when designing policies and procedures and providing services.		No
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	

	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes					
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		No				
	Is any third stage optional for residents? Riverside has a 2 stage internal process after this residents have an option to take their complaint to a designated person: either an MP or Councilor or a recognized Tenant Panel that is run by our RCVE They may also take their complaint to The Housing Ombudsman after 8 weeks.		No				
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes					
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes					
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? Most complaints are resolved at Stage 1 – Frontline resolution						
4	Communication						
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes					
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Yes					
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? The majority of complaints are acknowledged and logged at source.	Yes					
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes					
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <table border="1" data-bbox="263 1747 715 1825"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>85.65%</td> <td>95.10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	85.65%	95.10%		
2019-20	Q1 2020-21						
85.65%	95.10%						
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <table border="1" data-bbox="263 1937 715 2016"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>14.35%</td> <td>4.90%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	14.35%	4.90%		
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	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage one <table border="1" data-bbox="359 376 813 465"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>94.45%</td> <td>96.36%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Stage one (with extension) <table border="1" data-bbox="359 577 813 667"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>98.68%</td> <td>98.18%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Stage two <table border="1" data-bbox="359 745 813 835"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>93.12%</td> <td>88.64%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Stage two (with extension) <table border="1" data-bbox="359 947 813 1037"> <thead> <tr> <th>2019-20</th> <th>Q1 2020-21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>97.42%</td> <td>93.18%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	94.45%	96.36%	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	98.68%	98.18%	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	93.12%	88.64%	2019-20	Q1 2020-21	97.42%	93.18%		
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	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes																	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes																	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' Satisfaction</p> <p>12 month rolling figure is 24.8%</p>																		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service																		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p>April - October 2020 95% of requests were responded to within initial timescales.</p>	Yes																	
	<p>Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?</p> <p>All timescales were agreed with the Ombudsman.</p>	Yes																	
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																	

	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>None</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p>As above</p>		
	<p>Did we explain our decision to the resident?</p> <p>Yes</p>	Yes	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p>	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>Improvements made from complaints are published each year in the Annual Report to customers</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) Residents? - Annual Report to Customers</p> <p>b) The board/governing body? – Annual Complaints report to Neighbourhood Services Committee</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? – Yes</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>Riverside launched a new process in August 2020 using the HOS dispute resolution principles and best practice guidance to align our new enhanced process with the Housing Ombudsman Code. Our staff training has been developed to include this best practice to ensure consistency and fairness around complaint handling, with customer communication a key training point. The code came into effect in September 2020 so is too early to see any noticeable differences.</p>		
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We have made some additions to our procedure to include information on Confidentiality, how to handle Social Media complaints and to update our leaflets and Website with</p>		

	exclusions and also some guidance on fairness and remedies in line with Housing Ombudsman best practice.		
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