

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Compliance Self-Assessment

1 October 2019 – 30 September 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>	Yes	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon: <i>The exclusions are considered reasonable and fair e.g. matters outside of our control; issues subject to legal proceedings; complaints being pursued unreasonably; that relate to matters over six months old although discretion can be applied.</i></p>	Yes	
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? <i>Our complaints policy including the process is available on our website and we will include details of the process in our annual report. Dissatisfied customers are advised of the process on calls, via email exchange, web chat or direct messages on social media and in complaint responses.</i></p>	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <i>Managers and Heads of Service are responsible for investigating and responding to complaints within their service area. They are supported by a central team who investigate and respond to some complaints. This team logs, monitors, advises, quality assures all formal complaint responses and consider 2nd stage review requests. They also maintain and monitor a complaints action log.</i></p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p>	Yes	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? <i>There is no third stage in our complaints process and the Ombudsman does not believe a third stage is necessary.</i></p>	N/A	

	Is any third stage optional for residents?	N/A	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? At every stage the customer should be advised of this right and it is included in each formal stage written response.	Yes	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? One Manchester's approach to complaints is early resolution and we operate an informal 'put it right' stage with a 48 hour response timescale. In this self-assessment timeframe 1147 informal complaints were received and the total number of all complaints resolved at this stage was circa 94%.		
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? The policy and process includes this requirement.	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? The policy and process includes this requirement.	Yes	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? Formal complaints are logged and acknowledged within two working days.	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? The stage one and stage two formal response letters include this advice and it should be provided verbally or otherwise at the informal stage.	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	97%	65/67
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	3%	2/67
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) Note: two calculations are provided here – firstly as per the Code timescales; secondly as per OM policy prior to the Code which had different timescales in place.	Code: 48% 98% 29% n/a	OM: 73% 98% 100% n/a
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? Reasons for extended timescales have included complaint complexity; complainant availability and relevant staff absence.	Yes	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? The policy and process includes this requirement and holding letters are sent.	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?	40%*	4/10

	<i>*Based on 10 returns of formal complaint satisfaction surveys this year so a very small sample (satisfaction with informal complaints is not currently captured)</i>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		No
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? <i>One request for evidence involved a high number of complaints by the same complainant and the extension of time was agreed with the Ombudsman.</i>	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? <i>From a sample of cases advice was generally accurate and easy to understand. Since 1 April 2020 formal complaint responses are reviewed for accuracy by our Complaints Team before being issued.</i>	Yes	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? <i>Five</i>		
	What were the reasons for the refusals? <i>Two were refused as 'out of time' i.e. requested more than one month after the stage one response (we do apply reasonable discretion) and accepted as such by the complainant. One was refused as the issue complained about occurred several years earlier. One was refused as our final response had been provided. One was refused as our final response had been provided and the next step would be the service charge first tier tribunal which was the advice offered.</i>		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? <i>The policy and process includes a remedies section which should be appropriately applied. We maintain a complaints action log to record and track remedial actions.</i>	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>The central team conducts deep dives into the causes and journeys of complaints including customer sentiment indexing i.e. how the customer will have felt at each touchpoint. Themes and action taken is published annually on our website on the 'complaints performance' page – link: https://www.onemanchester.co.uk/who-we-are/how-we-are-doing/complaints-performance and examples include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for all staff and a process to retrieve former tenant accounts in the housing management system. Current projects include a Customer Experience workstream and the findings on complaints will feed into a wider improvement plan.</i>		

<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? <i>As above on the One Manchester website</i></p> <p>b) the board/governing body? <i>Quarterly reports to Place Committee and an annual report to Board from May 2021</i></p> <p>c) in the Annual Report? <i>To be included in the 2019/20 Annual Report</i></p>		
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>What changes have we made? <i>Our complaints policy and processes have been amended to meet the requirements of the Code and include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>stage 1 response timescale has been reduced from an acknowledgement in 2 days and response 10 days from acknowledgement (in effect 12 days) to 10 days from receipt of complaint</i> - <i>stage 2 response timescale has been reduced from holding a review within eight weeks of accepting the review with a written response 20 days from that review to 20 days from the request to escalate</i> - <i>to comply with the above stage 2 timescale we have changed the process from a review panel approach to a review by an Executive Director</i> - <i>complainants are offered the choice of pursuing their complaint formally or informally at initial report – previously most were dealt with informally in the first instance</i> - <i>advice on access to the Housing Ombudsman Service is provided at every stage – previously that advice was provided once a complaint had exhausted our complaints procedure i.e. in our stage 2 response</i> 		