

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code – Self-assessment

Homes for Haringey (HfH)

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code		Yes	No	Comment
1. Definition of a complaint				
Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?	✓		HfH has adopted the new complaint definition in the Housing Ombudsman Code.	
<p>Definition in the new code <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>				
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	✓		Exclusions are clearly defined in our Complaints Policy and Procedure.	
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	✓		We have benchmarked the exclusions in our policy against other social landlords and they are consistent with exclusions which they have listed. Our list or criteria is consistent with the advice published by the Ombudsman.	
2. Accessibility				
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓		Multiple routes are open to residents, for example, by telephone, letter, online, in person, via representatives, advocates (including councillors) and social media.	
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓		The policy and procedure is on the HfH website.	

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	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	✓		This is not a separate policy. Our Complaints Policy and Procedure references making reasonable adjustments and this will also be referenced in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓		We advise customers of the complaints process when they give us feedback. We also advise residents in the annual report. From 2021 advice to residents about our complaints policy will be included in every edition of our magazine to residents 'HomeZone' and in our 'e' newsletter to residents.
3. Complaints team and process				
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓		HfH has a Feedback Team responsible for ensuring compliance with the complaints process. Service based managers are primarily responsible for investigating, resolving and drafting responses to Stage 1 complaints. Haringey Council's Complaints team investigate and respond to Stage 2 complaints.
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	✓		Complaints are investigated and resolution proposed by the investigating officers from the service areas. However, the Feedback Team Leader is able make decisions on cases, and thereby resolve complaints.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	✓		HfH's Feedback Team allocate complaints investigations to the relevant managers within

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			service areas. There is an expectation that managers will act on the initial direction. However, there is an escalation process in place if service areas refuse to engage which is activated by the Feedback Team.
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	✓		Yes, HfH offers a complaints panel which is available for residents after stage 2, before going to Ombudsman. Tenants and leaseholders sit on this panel.
Is any third stage optional for residents?	✓		Residents do not have to go to the third stage, they can go to Ombudsman after Stage 2. We offer the third stage to residents in our final Stage 2 response as an option.
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	✓		Final stage responses provide clear advice for residents on their right to refer to the Ombudsman. This is included in the Complaints Policy. We are also amending our letter templates at Stage 1 so that residents are advised that they can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage.
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓		All complaints correspondence is saved on a Complaints Management system (Respond).
At what stage are most complaints resolved?	✓		Most complaints are resolved at the first stage. 89% of cases were resolved at Stage 1 between 1 April 2020 – 30 November 2020.

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				89% of cases were resolved at Stage 1 between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020.
4. Communication				
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	✓		We provide acknowledgement of the initial complaint and inform residents of the deadline for our response. If we do not respond by the deadline, we contact the resident. We now contact the customer in between acknowledgement and deadline to get more information or update them on progress.
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	✓		Our Investigating Officers in Stage 1 complaints are contacting residents prior to sending their final decision in order to agree resolution and/or enable challenge. This requirement has now been written formally into our revised policy and procedure.
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓		All complaints are acknowledged within 2 days of receipt.
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓		All responses provide clear advice for residents on how to escalate at the end of each stage.
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			89% cases were resolved at Stage 1 between 1st April 2020 – 30th November 2020. 89% cases were resolved at Stage 1 between 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020.

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	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			78% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 between April 20th - 30 th November 20. 90% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 between 1 April 2019 - 31st March 2020.
	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) 			HfH are responsible for stage 1 complaints and work to a 10-day response target. 99% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 days (1 April 2020 to 30 November 2020). 86% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 days (1 April 2019 to 31st March 2020). The London Borough of Haringey is responsible for stage 2 complaints and work to a 25 day response target. 81% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within 25 days (1 April 2020 to 30 November 2020). 88% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within 25 days (1 April 2019 to 31st March 2020).
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	N/A		
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	N/A		We do not extend timescales in relation to targets but residents are sent holding responses to inform

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				them when we are late collecting information and will be late responding to them.
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction.			We have just started to test this through a customer satisfaction survey on a case by case basis at the point of closure. We will be able to report on resident satisfaction in 2021 when we have received enough responses back to report on this.
5. Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service				
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		✓	Haringey council respond to Ombudsman enquiries. They work to a 28-calendar day target for first enquiry response. Haringey council deal with both Housing Ombudsman (HO) and Local Government Ombudsman cases (LGO). The reason for our non-compliance on this point is that: 1) We have an established process in place (managed by Haringey council). 2) For Haringey Council this would also mean having to split timescales between LGO & HO cases which would be difficult to change and manage.
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A		
6. Fairness in complaint handling				
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓		We allow for a representative to complain on behalf of a resident. This is included in our policy.
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?		x	We do not currently test this. We will be including

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				this in our customer satisfaction survey from January 2021.
How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	What was the reason for the refusal?			<p>The Council refused to escalate 3 cases to Stage 2 between 1 April 2020 and 30 November 2020 (and 8 cases in 2019/20).</p> <p>The reasons for refusal to escalate were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new issue (so taken as stage 1 complaint), • out of time, • ongoing complaint and, • exhausted complaints procedure.
Did we explain our decision to the resident?		✓		The council explained to the residents where they refused to escalate a stage 1 case to stage 2. Residents are provided with a written explanation of the decision.
7. Outcomes and remedies				
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?		✓		We are committed to carrying out corrective actions agreed in complaints investigations. If corrective actions have not been fully resolved by the time a response is given, we log and track them. We are aiming to improve our monitoring and implementation of follow up actions in 2021.
8. Continuous learning and improvement				

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<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p>	✓		<p>Examples of improvements we have made through the learning process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We addressed the process and communications issues between Haringey council's Customer Contact Centre and HfH front line services by putting in place a training programme aimed at improving both of these. • We reminded contractors of the importance of communicating to all parties where the works may impede on neighbouring properties e.g. where scaffolding may go into a neighbouring property. • We reviewed our gas safety programme to ensure that vulnerable tenants were not having their gas supply turned off or 'capped' purely for Landlord Gas Safety Record gas compliance reasons. • We have ensured that our new gas contracts are very clear on the expectations regarding capping of supplies, warning notices and vulnerability.
<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p>	✓		<p>We have used 'HomeZone', our magazine for residents to publicise a "You said, we did" section which sets out our lessons learned from complaints and feedback. Going forward in 2021, we will have a regular slot in HomeZone to do this.</p>

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c) In the Annual Report?			<p>We will also start reporting learning to our Board from 2021.</p> <p>Our Annual Reports in 2020 included a section on learning from residents' feedback, and in 2018 we published a "You said, we did" section. We will ensure that our report in 2021 and going forward continues to share lessons from feedback.</p>
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	✓		<p>We were already compliant with many aspects of the Code but the self-assessment has helped us to review and act on the gaps and put in place or plan some significant changes for 2021.</p>
What changes have we made?	✓		<p>Changes include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We changed the definition of a complaint to align with the Code. 2. We included a reasonable adjustments section in the Complaints & Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. 3. We included a requirement in the complaints process that the Investigating Officer should contact the resident prior to sending a final decision in order to allow challenge. 4. We will be sharing information on the complaints process and learning from complaints in our quarterly resident magazine, every e-newsletter to residents from 2021 onwards and also with our Board. 5. The Code has raised within our organisation

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			the importance of good complaints management.