

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code				
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Action Required
	<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>		x	<p>No. Whilst the procedure explains what is and is not considered to be a complaint, this definition is not currently included.</p> <p>Homes First Complaints handling is currently subject to resident-led scrutiny review, which is likely to include some recommendations which impact on corporate procedure.</p> <p>Await findings and recommendations of scrutiny review.</p>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	x		No Further Action (NFA)
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	x		Time limited to the past 12 months is in-line with many peers. All other exclusions have alternative routes for consideration e.g. appeals against service outcomes/decisions etc. NFA
2	Accessibility			
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	x		Under normal circumstances, if customers need support in making a complaint, Council staff will help them to complete the complaints form in our Contact Centres or arrange for a member of staff to visit the customer in their home or at another convenient location. Due to the pandemic, if the customer is unable to submit their complaint in writing they can make it verbally over the

				telephone. Await findings and recommendations of scrutiny review.
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	x		NFA
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	x		NFA
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?		x	More information about how to make a complaint and complaints handling performance to be scheduled for inclusion in Tenants Open Voice.
3	Complaints team and process			
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	x		NFA
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	x		NFA
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		x	Engagement is fully supported across all areas of Homes First and escalation routes exist to ensure engagement as required. NFA.
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		x	There is no third stage. NFA.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		x	There is no third stage. NFA.
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	x		NFA
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	x		NFA
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?			Stage 1.
4	Communication			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	x		NFA
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and		x	The Customer Experience Team will review this aspect

	challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?			of the code for consideration of inclusion into working practices.
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	x		NFA
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	x		NFA
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			Approximately 90%
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			Approximately 8%
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) 			<p>43% - Changes in working practises and performance management have been developed to improve in this area.</p> <p>Unable to present this data currently.</p> <p>30% - Changes in working practises and performance management have been developed to improve in this area.</p> <p>Unable to present this data currently.</p>
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	x		Staff shortages, coronavirus and spikes in numbers of complaints have impacted on response times during the current year.
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	x		Not in all cases and this is an area which needs improvement.
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			We are currently unable to report this data, however we are introducing a transactional satisfaction to collect this data.
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman			

	Service			
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?			Not in all cases. Requests for extensions were made in some cases.
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	x		NFA
6	Fairness in complaint handling			
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	x		NFA
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	x		NFA
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?			0 – NFA
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?			Not applicable.
7	Outcomes and remedies			
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	x		NFA
8	Continuous learning and improvement			
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			We have developed a range of service and procedural improvements as a result of complaints and will publish a full report of these for the year in our next Tenants Open Voice.
	How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?			As above and through annual report to tenants. Annual report to Board (ALMO) Yes from 2020-21
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	x		The Code has influenced our approach since establishing the Customer Experience Team. This self-assessment has highlighted specific areas of focus for further improvement.

	What changes have we made?			As detailed throughout this self-assessment.
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