

## Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code				
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments
	<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		
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	X		
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents	X		<i>This is covered at section 2.3 of our complaints policy</i>
2 Accessibility				
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	X		
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	X		<i>In section 10.1 of the revised policy we have committed to make available online.</i>
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	X		<i>We do not have a standalone reasonable adjustments policy. Reasonable adjustments are covered in the complaints policy under Section 9, and in our wider equality and diversity strategy.</i>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	X		
3 Complaints team and process				
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	X		
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	X		
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	X		

	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	X		<i>There is a third stage of the process, which is the Independent Adjudicator. Residents are consulted in arriving at a decision, but are not active in making the decision.</i>
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	X		
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	X		<i>Yes, and this is made clear to residents at all stages, and is covered at section 4.6 of our complaints policy.</i>
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	X		
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?			<i>As at end of September 2020, 54% of complaints are resolved at Stage 0 (the informal stage). Of formal complaints, 125 were received between April and September 2020, only 29 of which were escalated to Stage 2, and three to Stage 3.</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	X		
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	X		
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	X		<i>Yes, we log all complaints and acknowledge within two working days.</i>
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	X		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			<b>77.85%</b>
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			<b>20.13%</b>
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one <b>95.69%</b> Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two <b>93.33%</b> Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	X		
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	X		
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			<i>We do not survey all complainants. A sample survey is undertaken monthly by an external partner (Acuity). For the most recent annual outturn report (2019/20) 35% of residents were satisfied with the outcome.</i>

<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		<i>The ombudsman interfaces directly with LBL as the registered provider, and LBL keep overall track of this information. We are occasionally asked by LBL to provide them with information, and they give us an internal deadline by which to reply.</i>
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?		<i>See above.</i>
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	<b>X</b>	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	<b>X</b>	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?		<i>As a rule we do not refuse to escalate as residents always have the right to go to the Ombudsman, and we are then requested to exhaust the complaints process through its various stages. Where we believe we have resolved a complaint at Stage 1, we will refer the resident to the independent adjudicator in the response letter.</i>
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	<b>X</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	<b>X</b>	<i>This is covered in our compensations policy at Sections 5, 6, and 7, covering both financial and non-financial remedies.</i>
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>We improved our internal tracking of complaints to ensure improved response rates at all stages.</i></li> <li>- <i>We used regularly-occurring complains 'categories' to target key issues. For example, we had a high volume of complaints relating to leaks, and we created a new policy and process to improve access and resolution in this area.</i></li> <li>- <i>We took recommendations from cases that were referred to the Ombudsman, and put in place new procedures e.g. Decant Policy.</i></li> <li>- <i>We have incorporated case studies of Stage 2 escalations into our customer service training programme</i></li> </ul>

				<i>for all staff to raise awareness of best practice and to seek earlier opportunities for remedies.</i>
	How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?			<i>Learning from complaints is included in the annual report compiled by LBL, and Lewisham Homes provides examples, such as those above, for inclusion. Complaints learning is also a regular agenda item on Board papers, and is also covered in monthly clienting meetings with LBL.</i>
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	<b>X</b>		<i>The code has advised us in the revision of our complaints and compensations policies, and the procedures that emerge from them.</i>
	What changes have we made?			<i>We brought the complaint definition into line with Ombudsman wording; ensured our complaints policy covered reasonable adjustments; revised our compensation policy to ensure a wide range of remedies and compensations were covered; and committed to ensuring our policies on complaints were made available online for residents.</i>