

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment form

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> <p>We use the corporate definition, which is:</p> <p><i>“An expression of dissatisfaction about the Council’s action, lack of action or standard of service, or staff, which the service user wishes to be treated as a complaint”.</i></p>		✓
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	✓	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <p>SDC’s current policy advises that the following areas are not considered under the complaints policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations of criminal activity (this would be dealt with under our Whistleblowing Policy) • Allegations of professional negligence/compensation claims • Complaints about councillors • Court matters • Staff employment matters <p>These are dealt with outside of the complaints policy; there are individual policies set that handle these matters.</p>	✓	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	✓	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	✓	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	✓	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	✓	

	Is any third stage optional for residents?	✓	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	✓	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage 1	
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	✓	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	✓	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	86% (based on the year 19/20)	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	13% (based on the year 19/20)	
	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) 	Based on the year 19/20 98% 84% 100% 100%	
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	✓	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	✓	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	86% (based on the year 19/20)	
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	
	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?	✓	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	0	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	✓	

8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>Our management team have been talking to staff regarding the importance of clear communication and the delivery of services at an operational level.</p> <p>Our repairs service was brought in-house with effect from 1 April 2020. It was recognised that prior to this, contractor performance was poor which impacted on service delivery and resulted in a higher number of complaints being received.</p>	✓	
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>We recognise that this is a weak area for us within our current complaints process, and as a result, we are looking to review how we share our learning outcomes and lessons learnt with our community and elected members.</p>		✓
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	✓	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>The introduction of the new Complaint Handling Code has encouraged us to revisit our complaints process, and as a result, we have carried out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have integrated Service Requests into our complaints process, so that we can track escalations easier and sign-post customers to our complaints policy in a consistent way. • We are reviewing our compensation policy. 	✓	