

**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**  
**Self-assessment form – Ashfield District Council**  
**Pre Policy/Cabinet Approval (November 2020)**

<b>Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? <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><i>The Policy needs to include this definition. <b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include this in the Housing Services Complaints Policy.</b></i></p>		<b>x</b>
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p><i>No - This needs including in the policy. <b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include in new Complaints Policy.</b></i></p>		<b>x</b>
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p><i>These need including in the policy. <b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include in new Complaints Policy.</b></i></p>		<b>x</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p><i>Currently not all accessibility routes are available. These need outlining in the policy. <b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include all above accessibility routes in the Policy.</b></i></p>		<b>x</b>
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p> <p><i>There is an overview of the policy and procedure on the Council's website, but there is no copy of the policy online. <b>Service</b></i></p>		<b>x</b>

	<b>Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to publish the Policy on the Council’s website.</b>		
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p><i>No, the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments information on the intranet for employees but no Policy available online for residents. Director - Resources and Business Transformation to review and update the Councils Reasonable Adjustments’ Scheme by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.</i></p>		<b>x</b>
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p> <p><i>We do this to a degree in that we update tenants with information in Ashfield Matters (the residents’ newsletter). We also discuss complaints with the Tenants Gateway at meetings. We need to look at how we can regularly advise residents e.g. include information with rent statements etc. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to promote Complaints Policy more widely to tenants.</i></p>		<b>x</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p><i>Projects and Partnerships Lead Officer in place for Housing.</i></p>	<b>x</b>	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	<b>x</b>	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	<b>x</b>	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p><i>Our Tenants Gateway act as the Tenant Panel and operate as one of the Designated Person should a tenant want to refer the complaint to this stage prior to going to the Housing Ombudsman.</i></p>	<b>x</b>	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	<b>x</b>	
	<p>Does the final stage response set out residents’ right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p> <p><i>The outcome of stage 2 correspondence gives the tenant, the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman Service and outlines their right to refer the matter.</i></p>	<b>x</b>	

	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	<b>x</b>	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 1</li> <li>• 2 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 2</li> <li>• 1 out of 34 complaints contacted the Housing Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<b>Stage 1</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?  <i>Residents are contacted initially to discuss their complaint and are then kept in contact during the duration of the complaint until the outcome has been determined. The resident is then written to formally with the outcome of the complaint and the options for taking this further, if dissatisfied.</i>	<b>x</b>	

	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	<b>x</b>	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	<b>x</b>	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	<b>x</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?  <i>Based on last 16 months - see above.</i>	<b>91</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?  <i>Based on last 16 months - see above</i>	<b>6</b>	
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one 32 out of 34 are within timescales</li> <li>• Stage one (with extension) None</li> <li>• Stage two 3 out of 3 are within timescales</li> <li>• Stage two (with extension) None</li> </ul>	<b>94%</b>  <b>100%</b>	

	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	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p><i>33 out of 34 complaints resolved without going to stage 2 complaint level, however no formal satisfaction survey is undertaken to determine residents' satisfaction with the process. We need to introduce the survey as part of the revamped process to measure this. <b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to introduce a satisfaction survey which will be sent out with the complaint responses. Satisfaction levels to be monitored and reported.</b></i></p>		X
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p><i>The one case where information was supplied to the Housing Ombudsman Service was within agreed timescales.</i></p>	x	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p><b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services will include the following wording in the Complaints Policy:</b></p> <p><i>'Anyone can make a complaint, including the representatives of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We can take complaints from a friend, relative or an advocate if you have given them your consent to complain for you.'</i></p>		x
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	N/A	

	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?	0  N/A									
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A									
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>										
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?  <i>As part of the investigation, where we identify that the complaint is justified or partially justified we will take the appropriate steps to put things right. We may need further information from managers to evidence what other steps we are taking to put things right.</i>	x									
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>										
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?  <i>See table below:</i>										
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Feedback</b></th> <th><b>How we have improved our service</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Repairs need to be undertaken in a timely manner and with timescales agreed with tenant.</i></td> <td><i>We are committed to maintaining a high quality service by completing repairs within the agreed timescales set out in our procedures and as agreed with our tenants.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Officers need to ensure that financial details are correct when making amendments.</i></td> <td><i>When matters relate to finance/payments and changes to these, officers have put further checks in place to ensure that these details are correct.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Commitments need to be kept when agreeing to actions with tenants.</i></td> <td><i>When making commitments to visit, call or respond in a timely manner we have put arrangements in place to ensure officers meet these commitments or if they are unable to do they</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>How we have improved our service</b>	<i>Repairs need to be undertaken in a timely manner and with timescales agreed with tenant.</i>	<i>We are committed to maintaining a high quality service by completing repairs within the agreed timescales set out in our procedures and as agreed with our tenants.</i>	<i>Officers need to ensure that financial details are correct when making amendments.</i>	<i>When matters relate to finance/payments and changes to these, officers have put further checks in place to ensure that these details are correct.</i>	<i>Commitments need to be kept when agreeing to actions with tenants.</i>	<i>When making commitments to visit, call or respond in a timely manner we have put arrangements in place to ensure officers meet these commitments or if they are unable to do they</i>		
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		<i>keep the tenant informed of progress.</i>		
	<i>Effective communication is key in terms of keeping tenants updated when dealing with tenancy matters.</i>	<i>We have highlighted the importance of clear communication with officers so that our tenants are kept up to date with any ongoing tenancy matter.</i>		
	<p><i>How do we share these lessons with:</i></p> <p>a) <i>residents? Tenants Gateway, Ashfield and Tenants Residents Forum, Annual Report (website) and Ashfield Matters.</i></p>			
	<p>b) <i>the board/governing body? Information is shared through Housing DMT on a quarterly basis and a report is scheduled to go to Cabinet on an annual basis.</i></p> <p>c) <i>in the Annual Report? Some information is shared in our Annual Report which goes out as part of Ashfield Matters and is located on the website.</i></p> <p><b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to ensure that all lessons are reported to tenants in the Annual Report.</b></p>			
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p><i>The Code has led to a review of the Complaints Policy/Procedure.</i></p>		<b>x</b>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p><i>Updated our Revised Policy to take into account the Code's recommended best practice.</i></p> <p><b>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services has reviewed the new Complaints Policy to take into account the Code's recommended best practice.</b></p>			