

**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:
Self-assessment form - 2022 Version**

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

Definition of a complaint

Question	Response
<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>	Yes
<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	Yes
<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Response:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service requests – e.g. reports of ASB, repairs • A complaint would not usually be considered 12 months after noticing the issue • A complaint may not be considered if it is a duplication of a previous complaint – but it could be escalated or referred to the Housing Ombudsman <p>If the Council decides not to accept a complaint then a detailed explanation is provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.</p>	Yes

Accessibility

Question	Response
<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone • Letter • Email • Visiting the Council Office • A home visit to capture a complaint • Online form • Via our Facebook page 	Yes

Question	Response
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? The policy is available online which includes procedure details about making a complaint.	Yes
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? We do not have a Reasonable Adjustment Policy but the Council's Equality Policy includes the points which would otherwise be covered.	No
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? The website includes information on how to raise a complaint. The latest annual report and previous newsletters all contain information about the complaints service. The next newsletter will include advice to residents on their right to access the Housing Ombudsman services, including the dispute resolution service.	Yes

Complaints team and process

Question	Response
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? Complaints are passed to the appropriate Investigating Officer for investigation and resolution.	No
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? The Housing Business Support Officer has access to other departments and can escalate complaints up to the Corporate Manager who can also compel engagement.	Yes
Is any third stage optional for residents?	No
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	N/A
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes
At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage One (82%)

Communication

Question	Response
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes

Question	Response
<p>The Investigating Officer can provide an update to the complainant about the investigation. In addition, the Housing Business Support Officer will provide an update if there are any delays anticipated and/or to discuss the complaint and provide any requested information.</p>	
<p>Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?</p> <p>Residents are informed of the Council's position at Stage One and can challenge the outcome of their complaint before escalating to Stage Two. If an alternative outcome is agreed at Stage One, then we write to the resident issuing an additional response.</p>	Yes
<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p>	Yes
<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p>	Yes
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage One?</p>	82%
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage Two?</p>	18%
<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <p>Exeter City Council timescales:</p> <p>Until 01/10/2022 Exeter City Council have been operating under our previous complaint timescales – 15 day investigation period for Stage One and Two and not within the Housing Ombudsman's new mandatory timescale of 10 days for Stage One and 20 days for Stage Two.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage One – 95.7% • Stage One (Extension) – 100% • Stage Two – 92.3% • Stage Two (Extension) – 100% <p>Our average response time is 14.2 days – within our previous target of 15 days.</p>	See description
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p>	Yes
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p>	Yes
<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of Housing complaints were Upheld • 40% of Housing complaints were Overturned 	See description

Question	Response
<p>Data from our transactional surveys shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of complainants were satisfied with the outcome of our investigation • 20% of complainants were satisfied with the outcome of our investigation • 20% of complainants were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome of our investigation • 100% of complainants were satisfied with the handling of their complaint 	

Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service

Question	Response
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A

Fairness in complaint handling

Question	Response
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes
How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	None

Outcomes and remedies

Question	Response
<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>Complaint KPIs along with commentary are reported to the Housing Management Team on a monthly basis. This provides an opportunity to identify trends, learning opportunities and a chance to discuss implementing any changes.</p> <p>Transactional surveys are conducted when a complaint has been responded to – follow-up actions are reported to the investigating officers.</p>	See description

Continuous learning and improvement

Question	Response
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	See description

Question	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our contractor MEARS have started 'Tool Box Talks' sessions - Inviting employees to discuss learning points raised as a result of complaints • MEARS have also started delivering MAPD (Making a Positive Difference) training to staff • New online reporting tool for complainants to log complaints • Centralised our payments process for processing financial redress • Complaint webpages have been updated to reflect the Complaint Handling Code updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Escalation timescale - Options to resolve complaint after completing complaints procedure - Removal of Designated Person details - Removal of Feedback (Stage 0) Complaint from process • Complaint response letters have been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's new templates • Started to set up a Tenant Panel to review complaints after Stage Two • Housing Complaints team have met with various housing teams to train on complaints process • Merged complaint handling with Housing Needs department to improve collaboration working practices 	
<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>Residents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Annual Report • Self-Assessment document – on Exeter City Council website <p>The board/governing body?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Housing and Development Advisory Board – quarterly meetings – complaints and performance are presented so the Board can note and comment <p>In the Annual Report?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, service improvements are noted in the Tenant Annual Report 	See description
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	Yes
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescales – changed from 15 days for Stage One and Two, to 10 days for Stage One and 20 days for Stage Two 	See description

Question	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated Housing Ombudsman Service information shared in the Stage One and Two responses• Removal of Feedback / Stage 0 Complaints from our process• Website updated to reflect changes• Internal procedure information updated to reflect changes	