

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

High Peak Borough Council Housing Services currently follow the Council's corporate complaints policies and procedures. The assessment looks at how this corporate policy and process matches against the Housing Ombudsman's new complaint handling code.

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 principles of the definition however we do not include this definition within our complaints procedure published on our website.</p> <p>This will be included in our complaints review November 2021.</p>
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>		<p>All complaints are triaged upon receipt and where applicable we will resolve the issue informally by raising a request for service or discussing with the service area involved. Complaints relating to an issue over 6 months old may not be considered, these are discussed with the tenant before going through the complaints process.</p> <p>Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour, in a minority of cases the way in which complainants pursue their complaint can impede investigations. The council has adopted the Local Government Ombudsman guidance in</p>

			<p>relation to unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complaints.  <a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/guidance-notes/guidance-on-managing-unreasonable-complainant-behaviour">https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/guidance-notes/guidance-on-managing-unreasonable-complainant-behaviour</a></p> <p>We recommend that exclusions are included in our procedure and this will be included in the review November 2021.</p>
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	The proposed exclusions are fair to residents as they mirror the guidance code	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Online, Face to Face, Email, Telephone, Post	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	<p>Reasonable adjustments not referenced within Complaints Policy specifically, but Council has commitments on accessibility and adjustments in wider policy on Equality and Diversity:  <a href="https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/article/680/Equality-and-diversity">https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/article/680/Equality-and-diversity</a></p>	

	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?		If a tenant remains dissatisfied with a service then we encourage them to raise this via our complaints procedure. We will also add to the review and look at including this within the Tenants newsletter and also include in the review of our Tenant engagement process being undertaken by Tenants Participation Advisory Service
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		We have stages 1 and 2, where we engage with the tenant.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No
	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, we have a robust customer feedback reporting system where we record all correspondence, monitor timescales and obtain detailed reports.	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage 1	

<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes, if the response is likely to exceed the deadline we inform the tenant with the reasons why – this may be due to gathering all the relevant information to investigate the complaint.	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Yes	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	<p>A high percentage of complaints are dealt with early, before triggering a Stage 1; we recognise that many residents may not wish to follow a formal process and just want an issue resolved.</p> <p>During 2020/21 we received 33 complaints relating to Housing service of these 3 were escalated to stage 2 .</p>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	All resolved at stage 2	
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?	100%	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>		
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	All extensions must have good reason agreed with service area and complaints officer	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	Not known	
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	<p>Yes</p> <p>Please see Housing Ombudsman Performance spreadsheet.</p> <p><a href="https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/">https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/</a></p>	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	n/a	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes - We would need to get agreement from the tenant before liaising with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	None	

	What was the reason for the refusal?		
	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?	Yes	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	Yes, we always seek to improve processes and procedures to reduce customer complaints. For example we update our Tenancy agreement to reflect both legislative changes and feedback from complaints	
	How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?	Lessons learnt form part of our Internal 1/4ly performance report and annual Standards Committee reports.	
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?		No our responses are in line with the code
	What changes have we made?	We are looking to publish sections of the code on our website, this will form part	

		of the review November 2021.	
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Issues to address and form part of the complaint handling review November 2021;

- Publish our definition of a complaint
- Publish exclusions
- Review the structure of the complaints procedure (number of stages)
- Demonstrate and Publish lessons learnt