**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:**

**Self-assessment form - December 2021**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code** | | | |
| **1** | **Definition of a complaint** | **Yes** | **No** |
|  | Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?  *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*. | **✓** |  |
|  | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | **✓** |  |
|  | Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?  Evidence relied upon:  Yes. The list of exemptions are reasonable as they set out alternative avenues to resolve complaints.  Evidence relied upon is in the Customer Feedback Guide available on our [website](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200195/contact_the_council/283/feedback_and_complaints) |  |  |
| **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?  *We have a Tenants Panel that is an option for residents once a housing complaint has gone through our two-stage complaints process, however, since the Covid pandemic started we have not run a tenant’s panel*. | **✓** |  |
|  | Is any third stage optional for residents?  *See above comment* | **✓** |  |
|  | 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? |  |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? |  |  |
|  | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?   * Stage one – 82.62%   Stage one (with extension) 93.93%   * Stage two – 92.85%   Stage two (with extension) – N/A |  |  |
|  | 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 |  |  |
| **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? | **✓** |  |
| **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?  *N/A*  What was the reason for the refusal?  *N/A* |  |  |
|  | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | **✓** |  |
| **7** | **Outcomes and remedies** |  |  |
|  | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | **✓** |  |
| **8** | **Continuous learning and improvement** |  |  |
|  | * What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Quarterly meetings with managers to discuss and share best practice in relation to housing feedback.   + Established a complaint forum to bring front line managers together to share best practice and embed learning from complaints across the Housing Directorate. * More resources in certain areas e.g. homelessness.   + Addressed service pressures identified though complaints and other customer feedback by re-alignment of resources to better meet customer demand. * Better communications   + Responded to complaints and other customer contact resulting from unclear communication by reviewing and revising the way we communicate with our customers, seeking their input and feedback to continuously improve how we communicate * Staff Training   + Addressed any underperformance highlighted through complaints of individuals or teams through appropriate and timely training * Working with community groups   + Introduced a new Tenant Engagement Framework to maximise the opportunities for our customers voice to be heard and to actively involve tenant’s in the co-production and co-design of service improvements. * Sharing available resources with tenants e.g. condensation video   + Developed how to guides and videos to help tenant’s remedy concerns about condensation in their properties |  |  |
|  | How do we share these lessons with:   1. residents? Published on website and Residents Action Group Meetings 2. the board/governing body? Discussed at meeting with elected members/ Senior Management Board 3. In the Annual Report? Will be shared as part of our renewed annual reporting arrangements in the summer of 2022 |  |  |
|  | Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | **✓** |  |
|  | What changes have we made?  Redesigned webpage and produced a Customer Feedback Guide |  |  |