

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

## Self-assessment form

Based on Cannock Chase Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy – no individual Housing Services Complaint Policy

### 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>Slightly differently, but yes.</p> <p>'An expression of dissatisfaction with our service (whether justified or not) which requires a response'.</p>	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p>Expressions of dissatisfaction with Government or local policies, as opposed to our failure to meet service standards or individual conduct issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are other processes more suitable for dealing with them such as statutory appeal or tribunal process;</li> <li>• they are outside of our control e.g. complaints about Social Care services, Highways/roads and Education: these should be directed in the first instance</li> </ul>	

		<p>to Staffordshire County Council  <a href="http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk">www.staffordshire.gov.uk</a>);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there are separate legal or regulatory requirements covering these services.</li> </ul>	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	<p>Yes, there are other routes to complain if unsatisfied.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p>	<p>Yes, various written and verbal. Also can be made by representative</p>	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	<p>Yes -  <a href="https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/customer_feedback_complaints_policy_final.pdf">https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/customer_feedback_complaints_policy_final.pdf</a></p>	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p>		<p>No policy, but as per the Equality Act 2010 that requires us to <i>provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people, defined by the Act as those who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities</i>, we would do everything possible to allow a complaint to be made.</p>
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p>		<p>Not regularly advertised, but all details are available on the Council's website. Housing Services will endeavour</p>

			to advertise more clearly on it's webpages and within the Housing Bungalow.
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	PA to Managing Director and Head of Housing & Partnerships acts as lead officer for corporate complaints process.	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		No. Dependent on Stage complaints passed to senior officer/manager, then Head of Service, then at Stage 3 the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		No, but generally departments adhere to policy to resolve.
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		No. Councillors only on Panel.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes, can go to Ombudsman if still unsatisfied after Stage 2.	
	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?	In 2019/20 the majority of complaints were resolved at Stage 1.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Complaint is acknowledge and if complaint response is going to take longer than 10 days at Stage 1 a holding response/update is sent with expected time. At Stage	

		<b>2 generally HOS calls complainant and will update. Stage 3 complainant kept informed throughout.</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>Residents can challenge each stage and escalate up to stage 3 where decision is made final.</b>	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	<b>Yes, within 3 days</b>	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	<b>Yes</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	<b>In 2019/20 14 out of 16 were resolved at Stage 1</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	<b>1 out of 2</b>	
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>	<b>69% 100% 50% (only 2) 100%</b>	
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	<b>If a response was complex and needed further consideration or input from various teams or partner organisations.</b>	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	<b>Yes</b>	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction		<b>Unknown.  Satisfaction survey not currently undertaken. Will look to implement in 2021/22.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	<b>Yes</b>	

	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	
	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?	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?	Yes	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	<p><b>As per SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED: APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020 (ANNUAL REPORT) Cabinet report of 17 SEPTEMBER 2020:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To complete all void repairs (where possible) before handover. A tenant complained about the condition of property on handover, with further informal complaints received about the condition of properties by other tenants. A Void Improvement Group reviewed this and determined to improve the standard of properties being returned. Staff changes have also now been made.</li> <li>• To ensure better communication</li> </ul>	

		<p>with tenants in respect of job times. A tenant complained about not being informed of the length of time it would take to complete a job. There was a breakdown in communication between the Contact Centre and Housing Repairs; this has now been resolved and Teams now have liaison meetings and systems are better updated with information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another communication skills improvement was required following a tenant's complaint that they were not treated with much respect or giving sufficient information on their waiting list position. All Housing staff attended a customer services training course during Q1 2019/20 and the Allocations Team staff were trained in how to obtain the waiting list information from Northgate.</li> <li>• Timescales for escalation of a complaint to be incorporated when the Complaints Policy is next reviewed. The current Policy is silent on escalation times.</li> <li>• To ensure that any email/Northgate recording notes are to be non-judgemental and factual.</li> </ul>	
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p>	<p><b>Cabinet report is publicly available and now lesson learned included in Annual Report to tenants</b></p>	

	c) In the Annual Report?	<b>Cabinet report</b> <b>Placed in Annual Report 2019/20</b>	
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	<b>Yes. More emphasis to be placed on continuous learning and improvement, and to better share lessons learned.</b>	
	What changes have we made?	<b>Lessons learned and what we did to improve incorporated in Annual Report to tenants 2019/20.</b>  <b>Corporate Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy will also be reviewed in early 2021 to see if any improvements could be made and to bring in any other elements of the Code not already addressed.</b>	