

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
Self-Assessment Form January 2022

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code					
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	Evidence	No	Comment
	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>			✓	The current procedure clearly identifies the definition of a complaint and splits this into 2 distinct areas: against service or staff. The Ombudsman distinct definition to be included in the policy update. Due end of February 2022.
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	✓			
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	✓			
2	Accessibility				
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓	Residents are invited to speak to their estate manager or operations manager in person, by phone or by email – contact details are provided for these. Should the issue not be resolved then postal, phone and email details are provided for Head Office.		
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓			To be published 28 January 2022.

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	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?			<p>✓</p> <p>Agreed additional guidance will be appended to the Complaints Procedure April 2021 with details on how reasonable adjustments will be implemented This is contained within the next iteration of the policy due for publication end February 2022.</p>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓		<p>Residents are able to access the policy through the website as of January 2022. Customers are referred to the process where they express dissatisfaction to ensure they are aware of their right to raise a complaint. Details of how to make a complaint were made clear in the the Purchasers Information Pack, which serves as a residents' handbook as is given to every resident at the point of purchase.</p>
3	Complaints team and process			
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓	The Customer Services Manager is responsible for the delivery of the complaint's services.	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?			<p>✓</p> <p>For informal complaints at stage 1 or 2 they do. The company takes all complaints seriously and owing to the nature of formal complaints, resolution at stage 3 is handled by senior management. This is clearly set out in the procedure.</p>
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	✓	The role of the Customer Service Manager in this context is to ensure that issues are resolved within stated timeframes.	

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	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p> <p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p>	✓	<p>Residents can decided to escalate complaints to the third stage.</p> <p>The Ombudsman service is referred to clearly in both the complaints procedure, and the individual final outcome letter.</p>	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓	A log is held confidentially and updated by the Customer Services Manager.	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	<p>Stage 1. The majority of complaints are resolved at local estate manager level. Cognatum empowers local estates managers and operations managers at regional level to resolve complaints. Due to the structure of the small head office team these are not logged into a centralised system.</p> <p>A statistically valid percentage is not available.</p>		
4	Communication			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?			<p>✓</p> <p>Expectations around communication are clearly set out in the procedure. Should any unexpected delays occur then residents are notified, however, there are a small number of occasions where this has not been the case. This will be reviewed and addressed. Due end of January 2022.</p>

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	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	✓	Cognatum operates a three-stage process with opportunities to discuss with the complainants at the point of escalation to clarify ongoing dissatisfaction and to provide any additional evidence to support the complaint.		
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓	The average response is 3 working days.		
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓	The Complaints Procedure April 2021 clearly explains our procedure		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	n/a	Due to the structure of the small head office team and dispersed management, complaints resolved at stage 1 and 2 are not logged into a centralised system. A statistically valid percentage is not available.		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	n/a			
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?				
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason	✓	Clarification on these points is noted in the Complaints Procedure April 2021		
	Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the resident informed?	✓			

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	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction.		Only formal complaints escalated to stage 3 of the published procedure are logged through to completion of landlords published complaints procedure. A statistically valid percentage is not available.		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service				
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	All responses were arrived at within stated timescales, including those complex cases where a timescale was extended with agreement.		
	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?	✓	Our procedure is clearly explained in the Complaints Procedure April 2021		
	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?	n/a	This doesn't apply to any cases to date.		

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	What was the reason for our refusal?	n/a			
	Did we explain our decision to the residents?	n/a			
7	Outcomes and remedies				
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	✓	While we would always hope to deliver service of the highest quality it is important to accept that mistakes do occur from time to time. The board and senior management are kept informed of the outcome of complaints, and a response built into the company's framework.		
8	Continuous learning and improvement				
	What improvements will we make as a result of learning from complaints?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand regular review of formal complaints to operations managers. With specific discussion on areas of learning and improvements. • Request further details of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints and resolutions for appropriate sharing of information. • Implement review of self-assessment to update Complaints Procedure April 2021. • Implement review and update of template letters to ensure appropriate sign posting to residents regarding escalation procedures. 			