

Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code Self-assessment

Self-assessment form

Salix Homes is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
This is an independent, impartial dispute resolution service that our customers can access.

They have produced guidelines to support effective complaints handling by social landlords.
To see how we are doing in this area we are required to complete a self-assessment on the keys areas the
ombudsman has identified.

A copy of the self-assessment is provided here for your information.

If you have any queries on this, please send them to complaints@salixhomes.co.uk

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Compliance with the Complaints 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>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	✓	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <p>The policy and procedure only exclude complaints over six months old as they can be difficult to investigate fairly and fully. However, these will be investigated in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>In the revised policy, awaiting approval, further clarity is provided on complaints that will not be investigated at that time based on the current circumstances, rather than excluded. They may be investigated later if appropriate. This includes where the issue is subject to legal action and the complainant chooses the legal action rather than the complaint route and where there is actual or criminal activity, or complaints that are already open and have been referred to the Housing Ombudsman.</p>	✓	

	The clarification of these ensures consistency and that complaints are treated appropriately. A record is kept of all suspended 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? Reasonable adjustments are incorporated into the Complaints Policy. We have multiple ways of reporting complaints to Salix Homes. We welcome complaints from advocates with permission to act on behalf of tenants. The investigating managers have the flexibility to respond in the most appropriate way and to adjust their outcomes in a fair and just manner to reflect any vulnerabilities or needs of the complainant.	✓	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓	
3.	Complaints Team and Process		
	Is there a complaints officer or equivalent in post?	✓	
	Does the complaints officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? There are designated managers in each service area to deal with complaints and they have the autonomy to resolve the complaint.	✓	

	<p>There is an independent central team who manage the complaints process. They select the appropriate investigating manager who has the autonomy to resolve the complaint and they have an escalation process if the manager does not comply with the complaints process.</p>		
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> <p>The team responsible for managing the complaints process has a clear escalation process to compel engagement.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>The involvement of residents in the decision making in relation to complaints was reviewed with the Salix Homes Customer Committee in November 2020 and it was agreed that a third stage was not required or wanted.</p> <p>It was agreed that customer involvement in complaints handling and investigations will focus more on strategy through identifying area for scrutiny based on trends in complaints or complaints handling issues.</p> <p>The decision making is more at a strategic level based on what is coming out of complaints looking at processes and service delivery rather than low level involvement in individual complaints.</p> <p>The Salix Homes Customer Committee will decide the areas that they wish to investigate based on complaints data, satisfaction surveys etc</p>
	<p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>As above.</p>

	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? Our response time for acknowledgement is 2 working days and we achieve this in 90% of cases. 00% within 5 days	✓	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 86% of complaints received are resolved at stage 1		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 12% of complaints received are resolved at stage 2.		

	The remaining 2% go to the Housing Ombudsman Service for resolution.		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one 79% are responded to within 10 working days. <p>Stage one (with extension) 21%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage two 99.7% are responded to within 10 working days. <p>Stage two (with extension) 0.3%</p>		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>Where timescales are extended customers are sent a holding letter explaining the reasons why. This can include requiring more time to investigate complex complaints or waiting for the outcome of an action or information from a third party.</p> <p>Further monitoring of reasons for extensions has been introduced and are being escalated to senior managers</p>	✓	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	✓	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>Six complaints (2%) were referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service implying that 98% of complaints were satisfied with the resolution provided by Salix Homes.</p>		
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?	N/A	
6.	Fairness on Complaints 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? One What was the reason for the refusal? This was due to the case already being investigated through another channel and so it was not appropriate to have two investigations on the same matter simultaneously.		
	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 development		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? We are developing approach for learning from complaint to better record all learning from complaints. Examples of learning from complaints in 2019/20 include;		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified that complex complaints involving multiple teams are not always handed well so we Introduced a business wide training programme called 'The Difference You Make' to break down silo working and improve complaint response. • Used complaints about repairs timescales to improve our repairs reporting and completions process. • Identified the need to introduce more training on complaint handling due to performance on complaint response timescales. <p>We are developing a more structured, holistic approach to learning from complaints and embed this throughout the organisation at all levels.</p> <p>We have recently introduced an evaluation form detailing learning from complaints which will be reported into the complaints handling team.</p> <p>This is to better capture the performance and activity in this area and to be able to report on this more comprehensively.</p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? Yes as part of annual and quarterly complaint reporting to Salix Homes Customer Committee (SHCC). We are currently exploring with SHCC how we improve this and share complaints learning with the wider tenant population.</p> <p>b) the board/governing body? Annual report to board on complaints which includes learning from complaints received in the year.</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? Not included. We are currently exploring how we can include this in our next annual report.</p>		

<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints</p> <p>The main change has been on learning from complaints. Sharing the Code has re-ignited the focus in this area and re-invigorated the discussion on how we use the information to make maximum difference.</p> <p>The Code has provided further guidance on complaints handling and has clarified the Housing Ombudsman Services' expectations which has been useful.</p> <p>It has encouraged the development of a consistent framework in the organisation to challenge ourselves to give more structure.</p> <p>There is more focus on documenting, evidencing and communicating lessons learned and changes made as a result.</p>	<p>✓</p>	
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated the website to provide more guidance to people who wish to raise a complaint - More promotion of the Housing Ombudsman Service - Set up a log of suspended complaints so it can be monitored, ensure compliance and challenged if appropriate - Updated the policy to reflect the new definition of what a complaint is - Introduced a new form for logging lessons learned and a process for sharing this information across the organisation - Raised awareness among managers - Escalation process for non-compliance with response times 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A more proactive approach to ensure response times are met- Raised awareness with the Salix Homes Customer Committee		
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