

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form - 2021

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>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><b>Exclusions include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues that are, or have been, subject to legal proceedings</li> <li>- Liability issues that are subject to an insurance claim</li> <li>- Complaints raised after 12 months from the incident/issue arising</li> <li>- Complaints that have already been considered</li> <li>- Neighbourly disputes (including noise nuisance, drug-related activity or dog fouling), or issues between mhs homes' residents*. These will be handled in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour policy.</li> </ul> <p>These are deemed fair and reasonable as they are covered through our Claims, Tenancy Management, or ASB Policies.</p> <p>The exclusion of complaints that are older than 12 months, or those that have already been considered is deemed reasonable and fair due to</p>	

		unreliability of evidence and or witnesses after 12 months.  We apply fair discretion to all complaints to ensure we provide customers with a fair opportunity to raise their issues.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	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?	✓	
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	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?		✓
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		✓
	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?	<b>First stage</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	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?	<b>98.7% (639/647) (mhs)</b>	

		<b>98.9% (97/98) (Heart of Medway)</b>	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	<b>62 % (5/8) (mhs)</b> <b>0% (0/1)(Heart of Medway)</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>Stage One</b> 72% (mhs) (421/579)/ 77.5% (Heart of Medway) (69/89)  <b>Stage One (with extension)</b> 78.7% (mhs) (456/579) / 85% (Heart of Medway) (76/89)  <b>Stage Two</b> 75% (mhs) (6/8)/ 100% (Heart of Medway) (1/1)  <b>Stage Two with extension</b> 100% (mhs) (8/8)/ N/A (Heart of Medway)	
	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	<b>41.25% (mhs)</b> <b>45.45% (Heart of Medway)</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	
	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?	✓	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?	<b>None (mhs) / None (Heart of Medway)</b>	
	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?	✓	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	All complaint information is used as part of an extensive research phase in our Customer Journey Service	

		<p>Design process, whereby we analyse trends and outcomes, as well as language used by customers. This feeds into how we design and improve our services. Some examples of improvements we have made this year (2021) as a direct result of complaints include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduced a Customer Experience group to widen the opportunity for customers to shape our services.</li> <li>- Made it mandatory for repairs operatives to take photos pre and post repair to evidence quality</li> <li>- Changed our complaints policy to simplify it, following complainant feedback</li> <li>- Introduced “early text alerts” for customers who fall into arrears</li> <li>- Changed our Assisted Decorations / Gardening policy to cover a wider range of vulnerable customers</li> <li>- Changed our service charge letters for Home Ownership customers to make content clearer to understand</li> <li>- Introduced clearer communication through our “becoming a customer” process</li> <li>- Formalised the process to agree outcomes with customers who require additional support</li> </ul>
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<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) residents?</li> <li>b) the board/governing body?</li> <li>c) In the Annual Report?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a. We openly report our complaint statistics on our website as part of our customer performance dashboard. Where we can, we include examples of lessons we have learnt through our complaints in our quarterly customer newsletters. We also share these improvements and learnings with customers whose complaint has influenced the improvement</b></li> <li><b>b. Our complaint performance is reported to both the mhs Group and Heart of Medway Boards on a monthly basis. A further insight report is provided to Board every quarter which gives further detail on the lessons learnt through that period. Our Leadership Team are kept informed of complaint learnings on a monthly basis via LT Customer Insight Reports</b></li> <li><b>c. Our annual report covers performance around complaints, as well as examples of how we have improved as a result of complaints and insight. This is available to all customers</b></li> </ul>
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	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	✓	
	What changes have we made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed the definition of a complaint in our policy and procedure</li> <li>• Established monthly complaint learning sessions with our Leadership Team to encourage awareness and accountability of issues within the service</li> <li>• Included customer complaints against colleagues in our complaints policy, in order to increase transparency for customers, and to simplify the process</li> <li>• Exploring avenues to improve how we are communicating our learnings to customers on a more proactive and frequent basis</li> <li>• Introduced an approval process for complaints that need longer than 10 working days to resolve</li> <li>• Introduced a method of recording reasons for stage 1 resolutions that will likely take longer than 10 working days to resolve</li> <li>• Adjusted our “Managing unreasonable behaviour” policy to ensure it was fair and reasonable to all customers</li> <li>• Introducing a compensation policy to ensure fair and appropriate redress</li> </ul>	