

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment form

Soho Housing Association (SHA) V1

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>	Yes	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusions are in line with best practice from other leading associations. • Our specialist housing legal advisers Devonshires approved this aspect of the policy. • Our complaints policy was approved by our residents' scrutiny panel and proofed by experienced staff and Board members. 		
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our diversity, equality and inclusion policy sets out our objectives. 	Yes	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints are monitored and co-ordinated by the Customer Services Manager 	Yes	

	<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, the Customer Services Manager will also respond to some stage 1 complaints and contribute to some investigations. 	Yes	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For transparency all complaint status and progress is shared with the operational team on a weekly basis. This is also monitored by the senior management team. • We also have a complaints handling protocol that all staff must adhere to and this is monitored by the Customer Services Manager and Operations Director. 	Yes	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure, are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 19/20 financial year we had a third stage for our complaints procedure. • Stage three complaints were heard by the CEO and a Board member, Soho Housing's board includes resident board members who may be involved in the hearing. • Outside of their involvement there was no further resident involvement in the process. At the time that we moved from a three stage process to a two stage process, we had not heard a stage three complaint for 18 months. 		No
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No
	<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter templates are used with this information included. 	Yes	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes	
	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p> <p>Most complaints are resolved at stage 1.</p>		
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Yes	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p>In 2019/20 we received 35 complaints, of these 29 (83%) were resolved at stage 1.</p>		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?		

	4 (11%) of the 35 complaints we received in 2019/20 were resolved at Stage 2.		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <p>In the 19/20 financial year, 59% of stage one complaints were responded to within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint and 66% of stage two complaints were responded to within 20 working days from the request to escalate the complaint. All complaints that were not responded to within the initial timescale did not exceed their extension timeframe of an additional 10 working days.</p>		
	Where timescales have been extended, did we have good reason?	Yes	
	Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>We did not carry out complaint handling satisfaction surveys in 19/20, this is something that has been introduced in the 20/21 financial year and will form part of our next self assessment.</p>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes	
	Where the timescale was extended, did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes	
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	
	<p>If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?</p> <p>The wording of our procedure for residents has been assessed by our resident scrutiny panel, we have used their feedback to ensure that it is easy to understand.</p>	Yes	
	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>In the 19/20 period, we refused to escalate three complaints.</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p>One complaint was not escalated as the escalation was requested due to the level of compensation offered, the compensation offered was in line with Soho Housing policy.</p> <p>The other two complaints were not escalated as the complaint was not upheld and no new evidence was provided for consideration.</p>		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes	

7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>For each complaint we receive, our approach is to carry out the necessary steps to ensure that the matter that was the subject of the complaint is resolved. Once we reach a resolution, we look back at the complaint and identify what could have been done differently to prevent the complaint in the first place. Where necessary we amend our processes to stop the same mistakes happening again.</p>	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made because of learning from complaints?</p> <p>75% of SHA's complaints for 19/20 were related to repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>Improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback from complaints and the resident group supported a change in our day to day repairs contractor and also formed parts of the terms of reference for the requirements of the tender process. ● There has been an improvement in the internal administration of repairs and more robust contract management. ● This includes appointments now booked at first point of contact and followed through to completion by the Soho Housing team. ● We have increased the number of post-repair satisfaction surveys that we carry out. With more surveys we are able to take proactive action if the customer is dissatisfied with an immediate message coming to our team if a negative satisfaction call is received. ● Internally we publish our complaints updates on a weekly basis. All formal complaints are logged on our housing management database, this system has built in time-bound workflows that allow us to monitor our complaints and ensure that everything is responded to within our given timescales. 		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) Residents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In specific complaint response letters ● Feedback to our resident representatives on our resident involvement panel. <p>b) The board/governing body?</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive complaints review was submitted to our board in March 2020, this included the complaints policy review. <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headline service improvements are included in the annual report, this includes those influenced by complaint feedback. 		
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised two stage complaints policy was put in place in March 2020. • Soho Housing’s revised complaints handling process promotes early dialog with the complainant and lead in order to increase chances of earliest resolution and customer satisfaction. • We use the Ombudsman best practice and letter template guides. • We have made it easier for residents to complain by providing different channels including making information clear and accessible on the SHA website. • On the website, there is a downloadable policy and separate procedure summary. 		