

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment from January 2022 – December 2022

Please note Harrogate Flower Fund Homes follows the policies and procedures, in particular the Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy 2022, of Harrogate Housing Association, it's managing agent. Their policies can be found at <https://www.hhal.org.uk/our-policies/>

| Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code 2022 | | | |
|--|--|-----|----|
| | | Yes | No |
| 1 | Definition of a complaint | | |
| | <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><i>The exclusions are set out clearly in section 3.2 of the policy with examples of how the communication will be assessed and treated and the reasons for this approach</i></p> | ✓ | |
| | <p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon <i>The policy has defined what will not be registered as a complaint. These are situations such as: -</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An initial request for information or an explanation.</i> • <i>An appeal against action resulting in court proceedings or matters subject to ongoing court proceedings.</i> • <i>Any matter in which there is an established internal or external appeals procedure allowing the complaint to be properly investigated and resolved by another route. Examples of this are service charge disputes with a homeowner and neighbour disputes (unless the complaint refers to our failure to deal with the disagreement appropriately).</i> • <i>Appeals against policy decisions.</i> • <i>Matters that are subject to an insurance claim. HHA will not consider the matter under the complaints procedure until this route has been exhausted and will use its discretion in whether to log the matter as a complaint.</i> • <i>Complaints which are submitted anonymously (although we may still investigate).</i> • <i>Dissatisfaction expressed through satisfaction surveys (these will however be followed up and used to improve services as part of our wider response to responding to Resident feedback).</i> </p> | | |

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|--|---|-----|----|
| | | Yes | No |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any matter where the complaint constitutes a refusal to accept a rule of law with which HHA is complying. <p>The policy was approved by the Managing Agent's Resident Liaison Committee, whose membership is predominately Residents.</p> | | |
| 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? <i>Contained in section 4.2 of the policy</i> | ✓ | |
| | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? <i>No – a cover letter with rent statements on how to make a complaint should have been included with the summer rent statement issued to residents, this was omitted in error. A diarised reminder will be put in calendars to ensure that this happens in 2023. The cover letter will advise them what to do if there is an issue with the service HHA provide and how to make a complaint.</i> | | ✓ |
| 3 | Complaints team and process | | |
| | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <i>Due to the size of the organisation a separate role does not exist. The Admin Officer logs and monitors response times, and when a complaint is received, they inform more senior staff which is usually the Neighbourhood Officer or Assistant Neighbourhood Officer</i> | ✓ | |
| | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? <i>The Neighbourhood Officer and Assistant Neighbourhood Officer have autonomy to investigate and resolve all complaints to achieve a reasonable outcome which resolves the complaint</i> | ✓ | |
| | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? <i>Due to the size of the organisation the resolution lies generally with the Housing Management team. Where required the team has the authority to involve others in its resolution</i> | ✓ | |
| | 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? | ✓ | |

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| | | Yes | No |
| | At what stage are most complaints resolved? <i>Complaints in the main are resolved at the first stage - Resolution Stage - the Association has a low volume of complaints, and the housing management team are able to work with the Resident closely to resolve the situation</i> | | |
| 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? | ✓ | |
| | Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | ✓ | |
| | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <i>In the period January 2022 to December 2022 there were 2 complaints, both are at stage one as the complaints were received mid to end of December 2022</i> | | |
| | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? N/A | | |
| | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one N/A Stage one (with extension) 2 – currently extended due to the complex nature of the complaints. <i>Resolution will be included in 2023 self-assessment</i> • Stage two N/A Stage two (with extension) N/A | | |
| | Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? <i>Nature of complaints complex and letter sent advising of deadline to be extended to and contact being maintained with tenants.</i> | N/A | |
| | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? <i>Yes regular contact is maintained and updates on progress, recorded on the Contact Management System.</i> | N/A | |
| | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction The only complaints in the year (Dec. 22) have not yet been resolved. Results will be included in next year's assessment. | | |
| 5 | Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service | | |
| | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? <i>No complaints referred</i> | N/A | |

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| | | Yes | No |
| | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | N/A | |
| 6 | Fairness in complaint 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? No complaints reached this stage What was the reason for the refusal? N/A | | |
| | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | N/A | |
| 7 | Outcomes and remedies | | |
| | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | ✓ | |
| 8 | Continuous learning and improvement | | |
| | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>Sharing good practice at Housing Management Huddle meetings and personal visits to those who have made a complaint.</i> | | |
| | How do we share these lessons with: <i>a) Residents? Not applicable this year. b) the board/governing body? Through the Management Report provided to Board each quarter. The Management Report covers all elements of performance in respect of housing management to the Board and this includes complaints/complaints performance. There have been none in the current year c) In the Annual Report? Commentary on complaints will be included in the Board report in the annual accounts where relevant.</i> | | |
| | Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | ✓ | |
| | What changes have we made? <i>Staff are taking ownership to resolve issues as soon as possible and lessons learned are regularly discussed in housing management huddles</i> | | |