

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment from January 2023 – December 2023

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 2023			
		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></p> <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> 		

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<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 Customer 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>How to make a complaint is included with the summer rent statement issued to residents. A Winter Newsletter has been sent out which advises 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?	✓	
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</i>		

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	<i>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 2023 to December 2023 there was 1 complaint, this was not resolved at stage one</i>		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <i>The complaint received in the year and the 2 brought forward from 2022 have been through the stage two process but the tenants do not accept the resolution</i>		
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one 100% • Stage one (with extension) 100% • Stage two 100% • Stage two (with extension) 0 		
	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 <i>There has only been 1 complaint in the year this has not yet been resolved to the satisfaction of the resident. There were 2 complaints carried over from last year both not resolved to the residents' satisfaction.</i>		
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 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? <i>No complaints reached this stage</i>		

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	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>Training with staff to have a greater understanding of the residents' issue and a more longer-term outcome needs to be considered. Complaint to be closed off to ensure that the resident was happy that the actions taken are reasonable.</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. Board have discussed the 3 complaints referred to in this report in detail on a number of occasions 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>		