Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

1	**Definition of a complaint**	**Yes**	**No**
1.1	Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? *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*.	✓	
1.2	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	✓	
1.3	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon	**See Notes below**	
2	**Accessibility**	**Yes**	**No**
2.1	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓	
2.2	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓	
2.3	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?		✓ **See notes below**
2.4	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓	
3	**Complaints team and process**	**Yes**	**No**
3.1	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓ **See notes below**	
3.2	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	✓	
3.3	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	✓	

3.4	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	**N/A**	**N/A**
3.5	Is any third stage optional for residents?	**N/A**	**N/A**
3.6	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	✓	
3.7	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓	
3.8	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	**See notes below**	
4	**Communication**	**Yes**	**No**
4.1	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	✓	
4.2	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	✓	
4.3	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓	
4.4	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓	
4.5	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	**See notes below**	
4.6	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	**See notes below**	
4.7	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? • Stage one: 10 working days from receipt of complaint Stage one (with extension): further 10 days with good reason • Stage two: 20 working days from request to escalate • Stage two (with extension): further 10 days with good reason	**See notes below**	
4.8	Where timescales have been extended did, we have good reason?	✓	
4.9	Where timescales have been extended did, we keep the resident informed?		✓
4.10	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	**See notes below**	

5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes	No
5.1	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	✓	
5.2	Where the timescale was extended did, we keep the Ombudsman informed?	✓	
6	**Fairness in complaint handling**	**Yes**	**No**
6.1	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓	
6.2	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓	
6.3	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	**N/A**	**N/A**
6.4	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	**N/A**	**N/A**
7	**Outcomes and remedies**	**Yes**	**No**
7.1	Where something has gone wrong, are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	✓	
8	**Continuous learning and improvement**	**Yes**	**No**
8.1	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	**See notes below**	
8.2	How do we share these lessons with? a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?	**See notes below**	
8.3	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	**See notes below**	
8.4	What changes have we made?	**See notes below**	

Notes; Evidence and Action Plan

1.3 - Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?

Exceptions that apply to our policy can be found on Section 5, pages 7 and 8 of our Handling of customer complaints; comments and compliments policy document (link below). Which cover exclusions due to matters covered under other policies or statutory procedures:

The housing-complaints-and-compliments web page and policy document

The Councils Policy for handling unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants is to ensure that unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants are dealt with fairly, honestly and properly, whilst protecting other service users, officers, Members and the Council against unnecessary detriment.

2.3 – Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?

We do not have stand-alone reasonable adjustments policy and will ensure the council's policy on reasonable adjustments is reflected more explicitly in the Council's Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity or within the Housing Complaints Policy

3.1 Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?

For our organisation, a 'Complaints Officer' will be referred to as 'Responding Officers' these officers job roles are not dedicated to just complaint handling, they will be Service Managers (Stage 1) and Heads of Service (Stage 2) and will be responsible for investigating and responding to the complaints in accordance with the Customer Service Standards.

We also have a customer feedback coordinator who will register and acknowledge all complaints (as well as compliments; service request; comments); chase for updates and monitor timescales; maintain the complaint register/log to ensure a full record of each complaint is kept; prepare and deliver quarterly performance reports to the Housing Services Management Team and offer help and support with following our policies / procedures and Gov/Ombudsman advice and guidance.

3.8 At what stage are most complaints resolved?

Stage one

4.5 What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?

Based on complaints resolved in 2019/20, 56 out of 63 (88%) were resolved at stage one

4.6 What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?

Based on complaints resolved in 2019/20, 7 out of 63 (11%) were escalated from stage 1 and resolved at stage two

4.7 What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?

Based on complaints responded to in 2019/20

- **Stage one** - 78% (49 out of 63) were sent within 10 working days
- **Stage two** - 67% (6 out of 9) sent within 20 working days

4.10 What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction

We aim to resolve all complaints to the complainant's satisfaction at Stage 1 of our complaint policy. However, if the complainant is still dissatisfied with our response, they have the opportunity to escalate their complaint to the next stage (i.e. Stage 2). At stage 2 we will continue to aim to resolve to residents' satisfaction.

See above points 4.5 and 4.6 with regards to percentage and numbers of complaints resolved in 2019/20 at stage 1 & 2

Complaints not resolved to residents' satisfaction at stage 1 or 2 have the opportunity to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman. In 2019/20 we were contacted by the Ombudsman asking for further information for 4 complaints that had been referred to them during this period

Satisfaction is difficult to measure in terms of complaints, if the outcome is not what the tenant had hoped for, they will often express dis-satisfaction with the process. We will however address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

8.1 What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?

Please refer to point 8.2 and 8.4 and action plan below

8.2 How do we share these lessons with:

a) residents?
b) the board/governing body?
c) In the Annual Report?

Also refer to point 8.4 below - The new framework reviewed and mentioned in point 8.4 below, will be reviewed in 12 months by Tenant Engagement Board and the council's scrutiny committee. The resident involvement team provides an annual report to tenant and leaseholders regarding how the housing revenue account money is spent. There are numerous opportunities to provide more regular information to tenants. This includes:

- Giving tenants regular updates on housing services and key performance indicators

- You said, we did' – publish actions SCDC has taken in response to tenant requests, complaints or ideas.
- Minutes of meetings – publish and promote outcome and actions from involved tenant meetings.

8.3 Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?

We can use the code as the benchmark / minimum standard, that we should be following. Incorporating it with reviews that we have already started or have with in our action plan will enable us to resolve complaints raised by our tenant's and residents more quickly, and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements more effectively.

8.4 What changes have we made?

SCDC conducted a review in 2019/20 in consultation with tenants. It reviewed best practice and other tenant involvement programmes. The outcome of that review includes:

- A new 'Housing Engagement Board' – board members will be 5 tenants; 1 Leaseholder; 3 Councillors and Head of Housing, which will be held 4 timea a year
- A new performance review panel 'Housing Performance Panel' made up of tenants, staff and the Lead Member for Housing to meet quarterly
- Published a new/updated Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023
- Reviewing Tenant communication – Tenant and leaseholder magazine; New letters; Website features; Forms / Surveys and Meeting Groups
- Reviewing New communication channels – Social Media; E-newsletters; One view portal; SMS messaging

See a copy of the Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-23 for more details

Action Plan

Point	Action	Lead	Target date	Notes on progress
2.1; 2.2, 4.8; 4.9	Our Housing complaint policy (2014) is available on our website however it needs to be reviewed and updated to: ➢ Ensure Equalities and Diversity / Reasonable Adjustments are included ➢ Include accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint e.g. though the introduction of the new MySouthCambs Portal and through the progression of Social Media e.g. Facebook & Twitter ➢ Include changes to resident engagement, reporting lines and reviewing and sharing of performance data ➢ Include extension timescales (see point 4.9 below) ➢ Ensure it is clear that all responses are to be in writing (see point 3.6 & 3.7 below)	Data Quality and Improvement Team Leader Head of Housing Strategy	31st March 2021	
2.3	Ensure the council's policy on reasonable adjustments is reflected more explicitly in the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policy or within the Housing Complaints Policy	As above	31st March 2021	
3.6; 3.7	For all complaints resolved face to face or over the telephone to be followed up with a response in writing, so to ensure we are keeping a record of complaint correspondence and a full audit trail	Head of Housing Service	31st March 2021	

4.9	Where timescales have needed to extend for good reason, we need to be ensuring we are keeping the resident informed – the Code recommended timescales for extensions are as follow: •Stage one with extension: further 10 days with good reason (total time 20 days) •Stage two with extension: further 10 days with good reason (total time 30 days)	Head of Housing Service	31st March 2021	
8.1; 8.2; 8.3; 8.4	To review how we currently learn from complaints to drive service improvements, and how we plan to share these lessons in line with the code and outcome from our consultation with tenants	Head of Housing Service	31st March 2021	