

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

## Self-assessment form

As part of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code landlords are required to publish a self-assessment of their complaints process. The following document is published in fulfilment of North Kesteven District Councils landlords duties complaints process and procedure for 2020.

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	<p>We have amended the NK definition of a complaint in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code as follows:</p> <p>A complaint is:</p> <p><i>A statement that an injustice has been sustained as a consequence of maladministration. An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its own colleagues or those acting on its behalf affecting residents.</i></p>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	Exclusions are listed in the Customer Feedback Policy and accompanying Appendix and also in the Feedback leaflet. All available online
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	Yes	Exclusions from the Complaints procedure are listed below. There are alternative avenues for residents to make themselves heard. Feedback

			<p>that we cannot consider as a corporate complaint include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for Council services, such as reporting an abandoned vehicle or graffiti. These may become complaints if they are not dealt with correctly or quickly enough;</li> <li>• Requests for information or explanations of Council policy or practice. However, we will acknowledge and record these as comments against a Council policy so they can be reviewed;</li> <li>• Complaints that have a legal remedy;</li> <li>• Complaints about the conduct of Councillors – these will be passed to our monitoring officer and will be reviewed under a separate process.</li> </ul> <p>Further exclusions are listed in the Customer Feedback Policy in Appendix 1 – Management of unreasonably persistent and vexatious behaviour</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	Complaints can be offered to the council via any method that suits the customer, including telephone, online, social media, in writing or face to face.
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	Search complaints and first page <a href="https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/your-council/have-your-say/customer-feedback/">https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/your-council/have-your-say/customer-feedback/</a> has downloadable policy and appendix and customer leaflet

	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes		<p>The Customer Feedback Policy includes a reasonable adjustments statement.</p> <p>There is a Council wide Equality and diversity policy which includes: To provide services that meet the needs of the diversity of our communities and are accessible to all.</p>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes		<p>How to make a complaint is featured, at least annually, in the At Home magazine which is sent to all tenants and leaseholders. The contact details for making a complaint is listed on the 'how to contact us' page in most of the magazines.</p> <p>All new tenants are issued with a Tenants Handbook at sign up which has a section about how to make a complaint.</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>			
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes		<p>The role is an organisation wide administration team that acknowledges complaints and ensures they are dealt with in a timely manner in accordance with the corporate complaints process.</p> <p>At present there is not a specific role allocated to deal with Housing specific complaints.</p>
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		No	This is being considered for Housing specific complaints.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		Yes	The Customer Engagement Manager for the Council works with all services to resolve disputes where they arise

	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	Yes		There is a Complaint Review Panel that consists of two tenants and two Councillors prior to requests made to the Ombudsman.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes		The Complaint Review Panel is an optional course for residents
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes		The right to refer is set out in the final Stage 2 letter of response
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		A record of correspondence both to and from the resident is kept for formal complaints
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	1st		Most complaints are resolved at the first stage of the complaints process
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>			
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		Residents are kept informed throughout the complaints process as required
	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		Once the complaint is in the formal process it is not currently referred back to the customer for agreement. The escalation process deals with any disagreement from the tenant.
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes		All complaints are acknowledged and logged within four days
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes		Explanation of how to escalate a complaint is given at the end of each stage response and is outlined in the Customer Feedback Leaflet
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			80%
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			20%
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage one</li> <li>Stage one (with extension)</li> </ul>			95% (40 out of 42)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage two</li> <li>Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>			87% (7 out of 8) 1
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes		For example to gather further information that requires third party involvement.
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes		
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			In 2019/20 25 Not upheld 8 Partially upheld 9 Upheld
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>			
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?			There were no requests for evidence from the Ombudsman
	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?	Yes		The Council accepts advocates with the agreement of the complainant throughout the complaint procedure
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes		
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?			None in 2019/20 None in 2020/21 to date  Not applicable
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?			Not Applicable
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>			

	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes		We have used remedies such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologising</li> <li>• Putting things right</li> <li>• Payment for loss and expense</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>			
	1. What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisions to internal Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Internal feedback to colleagues through team meetings</li> <li>• Toolbox talks with contractors operatives</li> <li>• Changes to protocols with contractors</li> </ul>
	How do we share these lessons with: <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>			<p>In normal circumstances complaints are shared with the Tenant Liaison Panel (TLP) for discussion (COVID restrictions have interrupted TLP)</p> <p>Complaints and any learning is published in the Annual report to Tenants</p>
	<b>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</b>		No	No. We've made some minor amendments to the Policy. However our procedure and our response to complaints remains the same
	<b>What changes have we made?</b>			<p>Based on the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code the following changes have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed definition of a complaint in Policy</li> <li>• Added reasonable adjustment statement</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changed acknowledgement letter to include contact details for Ombudsman</li><li>• A remedy and a learning column has been added to the reporting spreadsheet in order to review complaints better and make any service improvements.</li></ul>
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