

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Compliance Report

Overview

We are pleased to report that there have been no formal complaints in our housing operations over the past year. This is a reflection of our proactive approach to engaging with tenants, identifying and addressing concerns before they escalate into formal complaints, and fostering a supportive and inclusive community. While there have been no housing-specific complaints, our organisation has a robust complaints policy that applies across all areas, including housing and social care division.

Complaints Policy and Approach

Our organisation's complaints policy is comprehensive and designed to encourage feedback, learning, and improvement. In the social care division, where we have received some complaints, our attitude has been to invite, open, and welcome complaints as opportunities for learning and growth. This demonstrates that stakeholders, including tenants, are aware of the complaints policy and feel confident using it when necessary.

The complaints policy follows a clear and structured format, documenting the various stages of the complaints process. We operate a two-stage process to ensure a thorough review of each issue raised. The policy has been reviewed and aligned with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, ensuring compliance and transparency.

Stage 1: Initial acknowledgment and resolution attempt within a specified timeframe.

Stage 2: Escalation process for unresolved complaints, ensuring a fair review by a different decision-maker.

Our policy provides clear guidance on how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if the complaint remains unresolved. This is particularly important if the complaint becomes more complex, if timeframes are difficult to achieve, or if the complainant feels that their concerns are not being addressed adequately. The Ombudsman's contact details will be provided to the complainant at each stage, ensuring that tenants have the necessary information to take their complaint further if required.

Proactive Engagement Strategies

Given the nature of our work supporting vulnerable adults, we take a proactive approach to feedback and complaints management. Our aim is to address concerns as they arise, preventing them from escalating into formal complaints. Key strategies include:

- Regular Face-to-Face Contact: Housing officers maintain frequent interactions with tenants in a variety of settings to foster open communication and prompt issue resolution.
- Tenancy Reviews: Scheduled reviews with tenants or their support circles provide structured opportunities to discuss and resolve housing-related concerns.
- Neighbourhood Walk-Through Audits: Regular audits involving a neighbourhood representative focus on maintenance and community needs.
- Monthly Neighbourhood Meetings: Housing officers attend these meetings, with a standing agenda item to discuss concerns or feedback.
- Annual Social Care Reviews: Housing officers participate in these reviews to ensure tenants are content and to provide a forum for families to raise any housing-related issues.
- Family and Friends Days: These events include forums for discussing community life, further strengthening our connection with tenants and their families.
- Anonymous Surveys: Stakeholders are invited to complete anonymous surveys to provide honest feedback on their experiences.
- Independent Reviews: This year, we engaged an external facilitator to hold independent meetings with tenants in our co-housing community, resulting in overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Two-Tier Engagement Approach

Our approach to engagement is structured into two tiers to ensure comprehensive feedback and early resolution of potential concerns:

Tier 1 – Regular and Immediate Engagement: Purpose: To provide ongoing opportunities for tenants and stakeholders to voice concerns or suggestions in informal settings, allowing for immediate resolution.

Tier 2 – Formal and Periodic Reviews: Purpose: To assess tenant satisfaction and address more complex or systemic issues in a structured and comprehensive manner.

By combining regular, informal interactions with formal, structured reviews, this two-tiered approach ensures that concerns are addressed promptly and that we continually learn and improve our services.

Trustee Involvement

Our trustees take an active role in community engagement. Each trustee meeting includes a “touch points” agenda item, where trustees share their informal connections and observations about the community. This ensures that tenant experiences remain central to organisational oversight. Additionally, the co-housing committee has a standing agenda

item dedicated to monitoring all complaints and their outcomes, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Continuous Improvement

To further enhance our complaints and engagement processes, we will extract data from our online platform to create metrics that track and evaluate engagement efforts. While the website is not the primary method for tenant communication—as most tenants rely on face-to-face interactions—we will ensure that our complaints policy is prominently featured in the Housing section of the website for easy accessibility. This step reflects our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. Our face-to-face approach, particularly in a cohousing community, ensures we adapt to individual communication needs and remain observant of potential concerns. Additionally, we prioritize collaboration with representatives and families to better support tenants with additional needs.

Policy Review and Simplification

In 2024, the complaints policy underwent a comprehensive review to align with best practices and the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. A key outcome of this review was the implementation of a clear two-stage process using straightforward language to improve accessibility and understanding. This change ensures tenants and their representatives can navigate the complaints process with ease and confidence.

Summary and Conclusion

Our complaints management approach prioritises proactive engagement, collaboration, and continuous improvement. By maintaining strong relationships with tenants, families, and other stakeholders, we address concerns early and effectively. This approach has contributed significantly to the absence of formal housing complaints.

We believe our proactive practices and warm, inclusive community environment underpin this success. Our ongoing commitment to these values will ensure we continue to deliver excellent service and support.

Statement from the Chair of Trustees

As Chair of the Trustees, I can confirm that our housing operations reflect a deeply embedded culture of care and responsiveness. Our proactive approach to tenant engagement and feedback has been instrumental in fostering a positive community environment. I commend our staff, tenants, and stakeholders for their contributions to this achievement.