

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

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> <p>BCH's current Complaints Policy includes the definition of a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction made about the standard or quality of service provided by Blackpool Coastal Housing, or by our staff or contractors.'</p> <p>We have proposed that our updated complaints policy, adopts the Housing Ombudsman's definition, which will come into effect by March 31st 2021.</p>	✓	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p>BCH does not class any of the following as a complaint or service failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of fly tipping or vandalism • Request for a repair • Neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour reports • When we are asked to explain a decision we have made. For example if we have refused permission for a customer to carry out their own improvements to the property. • Complaints about the actions of an organisation that is not working for, or supported by, BCH • Where legal proceedings have been started • When a complaint relates to an aspect of general law that we have correctly applied • Matters that have already been considered under this complaints policy. • When matters are raised that are already being considered by the Courts 	✓	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a criminal police investigation is invoked 		
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon:</p> <p>Although we do not treat these issues as a complaint under BCH's complaint procedure, we will deal with them in an appropriate manner i.e. referral to our ASB service.</p> <p>If we decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the customer setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. All customers however have the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Ombudsman.</p> <p>There are also occasions when it may not be appropriate to use the Complaints procedure, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When matters are raised that are already being considered by the Courts If a criminal police investigation is invoked 	✓	
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>We endeavour to make our complaints service accessible to all and therefore provide a mixture of on and offline routes for customers to make a complaint (information taken from the website):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone: 01253 477900 (option 4, then option 3) Email: customerinvolvement@bch.co.uk In person at any BCH office (Coastal House or Grange Park) Facebook and Twitter: @bchblackpool Write to: Complaints c/o Involvement and Communications Team, Blackpool Coastal Housing, Coastal House, 17-19 Abingdon Street, Blackpool, FY1 1DG For complaints, you can also complete an online form here 	✓	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p> <p>Our complaints policy and procedure is available online, on our website and can be viewed here; https://www.bch.co.uk/About-Us/Customer-Feedback-Complaints.aspx</p>	✓	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?		✓

	<p>We currently do not have a Reasonable Adjustments policy however we are proposing to adopt this as part of the updated policy and procedure, which will come into effect by March 2021.</p>		
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p> <p>We regularly publicise our complaints process to residents in the following ways:</p> <p>Information is available on our website: https://www.bch.co.uk/About-Us/Customer-Feedback-Complaints.aspx</p> <p>via Social media: Facebook and Twitter search @bchblackpool</p> <p>Complaints booklets and posters are available and on display across our reception, estate office and community centres.</p>	✓	
3	Complaints team and process	✓	
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p>The Involvement and Communications Team are responsible for the coordination of BCH's complaints service and each member of the team acts as a complaint handler for customers wishing to make a complaint.</p>		
	<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p> <p>The complaints officers do not have autonomy to resolve complaints. This is the role of the service manager and or Appeal Panel respectively. We think this is more beneficial as it promotes a process of active learning from complaints across the organisation.</p>		✓
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> <p>The complaint officer's role is to ensure that complaints are investigated and responded to in line with timescales and that the complainant is kept informed throughout the process.</p> <p>On an informal basis they encourage colleagues to resolve disputes by providing a mediation type role between the complainant and the service under dispute.</p>	✓	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p> <p>We have a 2 stage process for managing formal complaints whereby a manager will conduct an investigation into the issues raised and provide a response to the customer.</p>	✓	

	<p>If the customer remains dissatisfied they can escalate their complaint to the Appeal Panel, which forms the second and final stage of BCH's complaints process. A trained resident sits on the Appeal Panel alongside the Director over the service.</p> <p>In being accountable to our residents and valuing the role of complaints, we also include informal complaints as a stage in the complaints process. We feel as an organisation there is substantial learning to be had from this type of feedback and demonstrates our commitment to listening to our customers and acting on their views.</p>		
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		✓
	<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p> <p>There is a standard paragraph included in the Appeal Panel response letter, which provides information on how to escalate their complaint to both the Housing Ombudsman service and how to access the Designated Person.</p>	✓	
	<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?</p> <p>All formal complaint correspondence is recorded centrally. Wherever possible, correspondence from the resident will also be logged centrally.</p>	✓	
	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p> <p>2019-20 Informal complaints – 83 Formal complaints - 35</p> <p>*Please note that recording of informal complaints has increasingly been adopted by the organisation since 2018.</p> <p>*Please note further performance information relates to the formal stages (Stage 2 and 3) of our complaints process.</p>	Stage 1	
4	Communication		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p> <p>When a complaint is escalated for investigation by a manager, all customers are assigned a complaint handler who monitors timescales and communicates updates on the progress of their formal complaint to the complainant.</p>	✓	

<p>Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?</p> <p>At each stage, the customer is informed of BCH’s position and is given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute.</p> <p>At the investigation stage (Stage 2) for instance, customers are provided with a copy of the manager’s response and investigation findings. If a customer remains dissatisfied with the manager’s response, their reasons for escalation are clarified by the complaint handler and this feedback is presented to the Appeal Panel ahead of the meeting, to ensure all issues are addressed ahead of any final decision.</p> <p>In addition, all customers are extended an opportunity to present their case to the Appeal Panel.</p>	✓	
<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p> <p>All formal complaints escalated for investigation by a manager are acknowledged and logged within 5 days.</p> <p>We are currently working on improving the logging of Stage 1 informal complaints.</p>	✓	
<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p> <p>The role of the complaint handler is to advise the complainant at each stage what action they can take including escalating to the next stage.</p> <p>This information also appears on all complaint correspondence.</p>	✓	
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p>	55.26 %	
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p>	31.58 %	
<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one (BCH Formal stage 1) Relating to complaints service 2019-20 = 68.57% • Stage one (with extension) Relating to complaints service 2019-20 = 31.43% • Stage two Relating to complaints service 2019-20 = 92.85% • Stage two (with extension) 		

	Relating to complaints service 2019-20 (Appeal Panel) = 7.15%		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>While in most cases delays were justified, a small number identified scope for improvement and learning points have been identified and actions agreed by the relevant service managers.</p> <p>In the main, timescales have been extended to better accommodate customer needs particularly in instances where we would like to convene a panel meeting with a complainant's representatives.</p> <p>Extensions have also occurred at times when a customer or staff member has been ill and this has caused subsequent delays to carrying out an investigation.</p>		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p>Complaint handlers communicate any delays and agree with the complainant associated reasons for extending timescales.</p>	✓	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>The following figures relate to 2019-20:</p> <p>Stage 1 Formal – 33.33% of complaints are upheld 14.29% partially upheld 52.38% not upheld</p> <p>Stage 2 – Appeal 8.33% upheld 50.00% partially upheld 41.67% not upheld</p>		
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?	✓	

	<p>Included on the main complaint form is a section for representatives to provide their details and advise of their relationship to the complainant. Details are also included in the complaints policy.</p> <p>Again the complaint handler will facilitate and agree preferred means of communication with the complainant/representative.</p>		
	<p>If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?</p> <p>The complaint handler will discuss the responses issued on request and the complainant can also request to speak to the relevant service manager/director for further clarification.</p>	✓	
	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p>	0	
	<p>Did we explain our decision to the resident?</p>	n/a	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>The complaints service is outcome focused. Customers are required to identify what they would like us to do to put things right when they detail their complaint i.e. via the complaint form and this is captured by the complaint handler.</p> <p>Response letters confirm actions to be carried out to rectify issues and will address each of the complainant's proposed outcomes as outlined in the complaint form or in liaison with their complaint handler.</p>	✓	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>In 2019-20 the following were key improvements made as a result of learning from complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved contractor management/increased quality controls – adaptations/assets • Improved communication of major works to Leaseholders and for planned works affecting residents. • Improved process across our Repairs and Maintenance service in relation to the moving of customers' large appliances. 		

<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p>Learning from complaints is shared to our wider residents online via Wavelength and in resident newsletters and we share a range of complaints information including lessons learned with our customer panels.</p> <p>We need to improve our approach with our Board/governing body</p> <p>A section on complaints is included in our Annual Report, for the latest version visit: http://bchwavelength.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FINAL-BCH-Annual-Report-2018-19.pdf</p>		
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>We are committed to continually improve what we do however through carrying out the self-assessment we can demonstrate that our service is based on good foundations.</p>	✓	
<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We propose to adopt the Housing Ombudsman’s standard definition of a complaint and have updated our complaints policy to reflect the requirements of the code better i.e. improving how we log and report on informal complaints, as well as introducing a reasonable adjustments policy.</p>		