

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code

Octavia self-assessment on compliance against the Code

1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments
1.1	Does the complaints policy use a definition of a complaint consistent with that of the Housing Ombudsman?	Yes		The definition in the current Octavia complaints policy is consistent with the definition in the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code (the Code). We will add the definition in the Code to the Octavia policy for clarity.
1.2	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes		
1.3	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	Yes		

				<p>The exclusions are clearly set out, including matters subject to legal action and where the incident complained about took place more than six months before the complaint is made.</p> <p>We will always deal with the matters raised, even if they are excluded from the complaints policy.</p>
2	Accessibility	Yes	No	Comments
2.1	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes		We accept complaints however they are made, including in person, by phone, text, via our website, App, or via an advocate or representative (providing it is clear the complainant has consented to the advocate contacting us on their behalf).
2.2	Is the complaints policy available online?	Yes		
2.3	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes		Octavia has a Translation, Interpretation and Reasonable Adjustments Policy in place. The policy covers translation, interpretation and other reasonable adjustments we make to ensure fair access to our service, including in response to a disability or capacity issue.

2.4	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes		<p>The process is published on our website.</p> <p>Information on complaints handling is published in our Annual Report and Financial Statements, and in our Annual Resident's Report.</p>
3	Complaints team and process	Yes	No	Comments
3.1	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? (this is promoted for larger Associations but not required)		No	<p>Responsibilities for co-ordination of complaints rest with four complaints co-ordinators in different areas of the business (departments). Responsibilities for resolution and engagement sit with individual teams. We will review these arrangements in 2021.</p>
3.2	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		n/a	
3.3	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?		n/a	
3.4	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure - are residents involved in the decision making?		n/a	<p>There is no third stage. Octavia's complaints process has two stages.</p>

3.5	Is any third stage optional for residents?		n/a	There is no third stage. Octavia's complaints process has two stages.
3.6	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes		Information on the complainant's right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman is always in our stage two response, if the complaint relates to a housing matter.
3.7	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		This information is retained and kept in accordance with data protection requirements.
3.8	At what stage are most complaints resolved?			In 2019-20, 85% of complaints were resolved at Stage One.
4	Communication	Yes	No	Comments
4.1	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		Our complaints policy and procedure have set timescales for acknowledgement, response and updates.
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?	Yes		Our responses state clearly how, and by when the complainant can escalate the complaint if they are unhappy with the response, and who to contact.

4.3	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes		Our standard for acknowledgement of complaints is within three working days. We log complaints on the working day that they are received.
4.4	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes		Our responses state clearly how, and by when the complainant can escalate the complaint, and who to contact.
4.5	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			In 2019-20, 85% of complaints were resolved at Stage One.
4.6	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			In 2019-20, 12% of complaints were resolved at Stage Two.
4.7	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one (without extension) Stage one (with and without extension) • Stage two (without extension) Stage two (with and without extension) 			<p>In 2019-20, the following percentage of complaints were responded to within the Code timescales:</p> <p>Stage One response (without extension) - 92%</p> <p>Stage One response (with and without extension) - 93%</p> <p>Stage Two response (without extension) - 100%</p> <p>Stage Two response (with and without extension) - 100%</p>
4.8	Where timescales have been extended, did we have good reason?	Yes		There were three extensions in 2019-20, all due to complex matters requiring further investigation to provide a full response.

4.9	Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the resident informed?	Yes		In 2019-20. when there were three extensions, all three complainants were informed of the extension before the original deadline, and the reasons for the extension.
4.10	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?			In 2019-20, 58% of our complaints surveyed were resolved with the satisfaction of the complainant. This compares to 59% resolved with complainant satisfaction amongst our peers.
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes	No	Comments
5.1	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes		
5.2	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?		n/a	
6	Fairness in complaint handling	Yes	No	Comments
6.1		Yes		

	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?			Yes, but we have to be assured this is with the complainant's consent.
6.2	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes		
6.3	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?			We refused to escalate one complaint in 2019-20 as the complaint had already been upheld. This is in accordance with our complaints policy. The complainant was advised of the reason, and that they can refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.
6.4	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes		
7	Outcomes and remedies	Yes	No	Comments
7.1	Where something has gone wrong, are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes		Service Managers and our Complaints Panel make service improvement recommendations as a result of looking into a complaint. Recommended actions are tracked until they are completed.
8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No	Comments

8.1	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			<p>We report on learning and improvement in the Annual Complaints Report to our Group Services Committee and to Your Voice (our strategic resident majority group).</p> <p>In 2019-20, improvements included: reviewing our process for investigating suspected unauthorised sub-letting, reviewing how we deal with delays by sub-contractors, and ensuring timely provision of requested service charge information.</p>
8.2	<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 is shared through multiple channels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the Annual Resident's Report - In the Annual Report & Financial Statements - In the Annual Complaints Report to Group Services Committee and to Your Voice - At complaint review meetings - At contract meetings with contractors - At team meetings - With relevant individual staff members - At reviews of the Complaints Policy
8.3	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes		<p>The expectations and service standards in the Code provides a framework for setting our policy and procedure, and how we respond to complaints.</p>

8.4	What changes have we made?			<p>We intend to add the definition of a complaint in the Code in our complaints policy.</p> <p>We have incorporated wider reasonable adjustment considerations into our Translation and Interpretation Policy to become a Translation, Interpretation and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.</p>
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Dec 2020