

**ASPIRE HOUSING**  
**SELF ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE**  
 OCTOBER 2020

The Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaints Handling Code in July 2020 that sets out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. A key requirement of the code is that all landlords are required to submit a self-assessment against their key complaint handling principles.

This is Aspire Housing’s first self-assessment. It has been completed by an internal complaints panel, led by the Executive Director of Customer Experience and has been shared with Aspire’s new customer group OASIS and the Aspire Housing Board. All data refers to 2019/20.

The full Complaint Handling Code can be found [here](#).

1. Definition of a complaint	Yes/No	Notes
Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? <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>	Yes	As set out within the Customer Feedback Policy
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	These include complaints that are no longer appropriate, such as historic, already dealt with, part of ongoing legal action, and relating to anti-social behaviour.
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	Yes	These relate to circumstances where complaints have already been dealt with or have alternative routes of resolution.

2. Accessibility	Yes/No	Notes
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	Customers can make a complaint through any contact method
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	Website <a href="#">link</a>
Do you have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes	Included within the 'Equalities Impact Assessment' section and references the Equality & Diversity Policy
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	The customer communications plan has been strengthened to add more occasions where the process is available. Examples include the Customer Annual Report, Annual Rent Statement (due March), and on relevant letter templates. Customers are also invited to give feedback on the website which has been improved to add more links to contact us from other pages.
3. Complaints team and process	Yes/No	Notes
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	Head of Customer Services
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		N/A - there is a two-stage process before escalation to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)
Is any third stage optional for residents?	No	

3. Complaints team and process (cont'd)	Yes/No	Notes
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes	Included within the response letter template
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes	Stored on the integrated housing management system, called Orchard
At what stage are most complaints resolved?		97.6% of all complaints were resolved at stage one in 2019/20
4. Communication	Yes/No	Notes
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes	This is explicit within the Customer Feedback Policy and a key element of the complaints handling process, training, and quality assurance checks
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	Customers have a right to appeal at the end of stage one
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	Customers are provided with a reference number as evidence
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	Included within the response letter template
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?		97.6% in 2019/20
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?		100% - no formal investigations were made by the HOS in 2019/20

4. Communication (cont'd)	Yes/No	Notes
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? - Stage one - Stage one (with extension) - Stage two - Stage two (with extension)	-	In 2019/20: Stage 1 – 10 days = 75% Stage 1 – 10 + 10-day extension = 20% Stage 2 – 20 days = 94% Stage 2 – 20 + 10-day extension = 6%  Target times are currently a response at stage one within 5 days and stage two within 10 days
Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes	The reason for extensions is to achieve a resolution
Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	In line with the Customer Feedback Policy and complaints handling training
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?	50%	50% of customers surveyed in 2019/20 were satisfied with the resolution to their complaint. Satisfaction surveying will be strengthened in with the introduction of specialist feedback software.
5. Co-operation with the Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes/No	Notes
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes	
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes	

6. Fairness in complaint handling	Yes/No	Notes
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes	Documentary evidence available from Orchard
How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?		None
Did we explain our decision to the resident?		N/A
7. Outcomes & remedies	Yes/No	Notes
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	Regularly reviewed by the internal Complaints Panel
8. Continuous learning and improvement	Yes/No	Notes
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		Key improvements in 2019/20 include: an increased focus on getting repairs completed at the first visit; introduced a text satisfaction survey for repairs; changed how we delivered home improvement works; and fed into the new Service Promises

8. Continuous learning and improvement (cont'd)	Yes/No	Notes
<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>a) Through the website and scrutinised by involved customers</p> <p>b) An annual Board report and quarterly updates</p> <p>c) In the Customer Annual Report</p>
<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>What changes have we made?</p>	Yes	<p>Taken the opportunity to review and strengthen the Customer Feedback Policy &amp; complaints handling procedure, and communicate this across the business and to involved customers.</p>