

## **The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code Published July 2020 – Self Assessment Form**

**Completed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council**

**Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code**

### **1. Definition of Complaint**

Does the complaint process use the following definition of a complaint?

An expression of dissatisfaction however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group or residents. - Yes, the process has been reviewed to reference this definition and is compliant.

Does the Policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? Yes

Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Yes

### **2. Accessibility**

Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? Yes

Is the complaints policy and procedure online? Yes

Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? Yes

Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? Yes

### **3. Complaints Team and Process**

Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? Yes

Does the complaints 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 decision making? Yes

Is any third stage optional for residents? Yes

Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? Yes

Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? Yes

At what stage are most complaints resolved? At stage 1

#### **4. Communication**

Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? Yes

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

Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? Yes

Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? Yes

What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 91.8%

What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 7.1%

What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code Timescales?

Stage one: 90.8%

Stage one (with extension): 98.2%

Stage two: 71%

Stage two (with extension): 86.8%

Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? Yes

Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? Yes

What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction – 98.9% of all complaints regarding Housing Services were resolved via our internal complaints procedure and were not escalated to the Ombudsman.

#### **5. Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service**

Were all requests for evidence received responded to within 15 days? No

Where the timescale was extended did we keep the ombudsman informed? Yes

#### **6. Fairness in complaint handling**

Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? Yes

If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? Yes

How many cases did we refuse to escalate? 2

What was the reason for refusal? Complaint 1) further investigation would not achieve a different outcome and the tenant was asking the council to provide personal information about a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. To release this information to the complainant would have been unlawful under principle one of the Data Protection Act/General Data Protection Regulations.

Complaint 2) the complainant was requesting compensation for time wasted due to a missed repair appointment. The tenant was advised that it would be more appropriate to submit a claim under the council's insurance procedures.

Did we explain our decision to the resident? Yes

## **7. Outcomes and remedies**

Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? Yes

## **8. Continuous learning and improvement**

What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?

How do we share the lessons with:

- a) Residents? Responses to complaints and The Annual Tenant and Leaseholder Report
- b) The board/governing body? Tenants' Board Quarterly Performance Report and the Customer Feedback Annual Report which is published on the Stoke-on-Trent City Council website and taken to cabinet. Information is also shared at the Uitas Partnership Board and Uitas Management Board.
- c) In the Annual Report? Customer Feedback Annual Report which is published on the Stoke-on-Trent City Council website and taken to cabinet.

Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? This will be reviewed in line with our annual report and Housing Monitoring Quality and Assurance Framework.

What changes have we made? Inclusion of the definition of the complaint into the complaints procedure.