

Landlord complaints – briefing note

Changes we will implement from 1 April (in advance of new policy being agreed)

General

- An individual doesn't have to use the word "complaint" for it to be treated as such
- Whenever an individual expresses dissatisfaction, even if it is in relation to a service request which is ongoing, we must ask them whether they wish to make a complaint
- When issuing a survey, we should include information on how to complain
- Complaints must be able to be raised by any means, and with any member of staff (which means if a caller wishes to make a complaint, the member of staff taking the call must take the complaint at that point)
- We must not refuse to accept a complaint or escalate a complaint unless we have valid reason. Currently this relates to those reasons set out in the current complaints process, however the new policy will be in line with the code
- We must give a complainant the opportunity to have a representative or be accompanied at any meeting (I have included something in the policy reserving the right to refuse to deal with a representative who has restrictions placed on them through the persistent & unreasonable complainant policy or other restrictions)
- We must not have 'informal complaints' as that adds an extra stage – if someone wishes to complain, it must be handled at stage 1
- If we use a third party / contractor to provide a service, any complaints they deal with on our behalf must comply with the code and must form part of the two-stage process
- We must make reasonable adjustments and keep a record of them, as well as any disabilities disclosed, and we must keep them under review. The complaints team will need to work with you to ensure we record this information if you have it on file already
- A record of all correspondence with the complainant or with other parties about the complaint must be kept. We will do this by using sharepoint so you can add any correspondence you have that we have not been included in to the complaint file
- Responses to complaints about us as landlord must be in writing, even if the complainant has asked to be informed by telephone etc, the HOS will need to see something documented – we can discuss how to do this if the occasion arises
- Landlords should handle enquiries from MPs or councillors in the same way it would handle contact made by a resident. If an MP or councillor enquiry is

received and the file shows a previous contact or complaint from the resident about the matter, it should be taken as an indication they remain dissatisfied and we should contact the complainant to explore the reason they remain dissatisfied and ask whether they would like it to be investigated as a complaint / escalated to stage 2. We can still respond to the MP/councillor to explain what action has been taken

- If the responding officer speaks to the complainant during the course of the investigation and the complainant decides they do not wish to pursue the complaint, the complaints team will require evidence of this.

Stage 1 complaints

- The complaints team must set out their understanding of the complaint and agree this “complaint definition” and the outcomes they are seeking with the complainant at the outset – this definition must then be included in the complaint response at both stages
- If the officer responding to a complaint is not going to be able to respond by the deadline, we must inform the complainant as early as possible, providing reasons for needing an extension (annual leave, illness and workload are not acceptable reasons as the HOS expects complaint handling to be sufficiently resourced to prevent this from being an issue), agreeing timescales for keeping them informed and giving them details of the HOS at that point
- Extensions to the deadline for a response cannot be longer than ten working days
- Until the new policy is approved, the deadline for a response will remain at ten working days from receipt of the complaint (in the new policy, this will be extended to ten working days from the date of acknowledgement, and we will have five working days to acknowledge)
- We must provide a response when the outcome to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions are complete
- Additional complaints raised during the investigation must be incorporated into the stage 1 if they are related
- The stage 1 response must include:
 - The complaint stage
 - The “definition” of the complaint
 - The decision
 - Reasons for the decision
 - Details of the remedy
 - Any outstanding actions
 - How to escalate to stage 2

Stage 2 complaints

- The complainant doesn’t have to explain why they are requesting escalation to stage 2, but we will make reasonable efforts to understand why they remain unhappy

- If the officer responding to a complaint is not going to be able to respond by the deadline, we must inform the complainant as early as possible, providing reasons for needing an extension (annual leave, illness and workload are not acceptable reasons as the HOS expects complaint handling to be sufficiently resourced to prevent this from being an issue), agreeing timescales for keeping them informed and giving them details of the HOS at that point
- Extensions to the deadline for a response cannot be longer than ten working days
- Until the new policy is approved, the deadline for a stage 2 response will remain at ten working days from receipt of the complaint (in the new policy, this will be extended to ten or twenty working days from the date of acknowledgement, and we will have five working days to acknowledge)
- The stage 2 response must include:
 - The complaint stage
 - The “definition” of the complaint
 - The decision
 - Reasons for the decision
 - Details of the remedy
 - Any outstanding actions
 - How to complain to the HOS