

## Poplar HARCA Self-Assessment Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code July 2020

The Housing Ombudsman has launched a Complaints Handling Code, designed to offer assurance that approaches are clear, simple and accessible; and complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. Landlords are required to carry out a self-assessment against the code.

Code Standard	PH compliance
<b>Definition of a complaint</b>	
<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>We have updated the policy with this wording.</p>
<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p>The exclusions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Can be decided by an alternative process</li> <li>b. Happened more than six months ago</li> <li>c. Has already been raised as a complaint</li> <li>d. Has been referred for legal proceedings</li> <li>e. Is about a third party</li> <li>f. Is about compliance with law or regulation</li> <li>g. Is about PH as an employer</li> </ul>
<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p>	<p>The exclusions stop channel-hopping; avoid the complicating/confounding of legal or other proceedings; and restrict to what Poplar HARCA has control over.</p> <p>If not accepted as a 'formal' complaint, the enquiry is logged and responded to as correspondence.</p>
<b>Accessibility</b>	
<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p>	<p>In writing, in person, by phone, using social media.</p>
<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.poplarharca.co.uk/complaints">https://www.poplarharca.co.uk/complaints</a></p>
<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p>	<p>PH's policy is to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations.</p> <p>It carries out impact assessments to identify potential issues with changes to policies and practices.</p>
<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p>	<p>The process is available on-line, and is featured in newsletters.</p>
<b>Complaints team and process</b>	
<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p>	<p>We have a dedicated Customer Relations Team.</p>

Code Standard	PH compliance
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	The Team acts as 'honest broker' between residents and Teams when matters become complex or tense. It facilitates all Review Panels, and can commission 'expert' independent advice. The Team has direct access to the Chief Executive, and reports to CMT.
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	The Team acts as 'honest broker' between residents and Teams when matters become complex or tense. It facilitates all Review Panels, and can commission 'expert' independent advice. The Team has direct access to the Chief Executive, and reports to CMT.
If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	We have only two stages. Review Panels normally include a resident trained to consider complaints. The rare exception is when a vexatious complainant presents a risk; and exceptions are reported to Services Committee.
Is any third stage optional for residents?	n/a
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?	Resolve (first stage)
<b>Communication</b>	
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	The Investigating Officer keeps the resident informed throughout the resolve process; and the Business Support Team take over communication for the review process.
Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Residents can request a review of any resolve decision.
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Our target is 2 days.
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Each response sets out escalation process.
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	94.2%
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	5.8%
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? a) Stage one b) Stage one (with extension)	a) 86.2% b) 87.1% c) 100% d) n/a

Code Standard	PH compliance
c) Stage two d) Stage two (with extension)	
Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Extensions have to be negotiated with the resident. They are only ever as a result of complex investigations that require third-party input.
Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Investigating officer advises resident; confirms in writing and adds evidence to the database.
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	94.2% of complaints are resolved to the resident's satisfaction and <b>do not</b> escalate to review 84.6% of reviews are carried out to the resident's satisfaction and <b>do not</b> escalate to the Ombudsman 98.1% of all cases are resolved before getting to the Ombudsman.
<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>	
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	We have never requested an extension
<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>	
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Staff have all received training, and information for residents is kept easy to understand.
How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	Our policy requires us to escalate to Review when requested.
Did we explain our decision to the resident?	n/a
<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>	
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes. This is set out in the policy as to how we put the remedy for the resident, and more strategic learning is captured through case studies, changes in policy or practice, and staff training.
<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>	
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies and 'you said, we did' newsletter articles</li> <li>• 'Lean' review of leaks and condensation processes</li> <li>• Internal training/campaign: tips, guidance and advice</li> <li>• Specialist Team developed to lead on complex and multi-discipline complaints</li> <li>• Succession applications now processed and then investigated, not vice versa</li> <li>• Training for contractors</li> </ul>
How do we share these lessons with:	a) Case studies and 'you said, we did' newsletter articles and on website

Code Standard	PH compliance
a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?	b) Quarterly performance reported to CMT, Services and Board; and internal audit reported to ARC c) 'Easy read' summary of annual report
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	The Code has been useful in providing assurance that our policy and process is fit for purpose.
What changes have we made?	We have adopted the Code's wording to define a complaint.