

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form for Magna Housing

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	<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>	x	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	x	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon</p> <p>Paragraph 4.3 of the formal complaints policy details what is not considered a complaint.</p> <p>We are committed to fairness and equality for all as detailed in section 2 of the formal complaints procedure.</p> <p>We consulted the Magna online customer engagement group (MORE) and a group of mystery shoppers on a section of the draft formal complaints policy in November 2020. We asked them to consider whether the exclusions listed in our policy at paragraph 4.3 were reasonable and fair when compared with the relevant extract from the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code .</p> <p>Of the 17 MORE customers who responded the majority felt that the exclusions were reasonable and fair, but suggested a few changes in order to clarify the policy. We will include these suggested amendments as part of the draft revised formal complaints policy that will come to the March 2021 Board meeting..</p> <p>Of the 4 mystery shoppers who responded most felt that the exclusions were reasonable and fair, but suggested a few changes in order to strengthen the policy. We will include these suggested amendments as part of the draft revised formal complaints policy that will come to the March 2021 Board meeting..</p>	x	

2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	x	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? The policy is on our website. We will add the procedure to the website when we have completed amendments.	x	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? We comply with the Equality Act 2010 as stated in paragraph 2.1 of the formal complaints procedure	x	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	x	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	x	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? Complaints officers advise and guide. Heads of Service/Directors make decisions on outcome of complaints based on evidence obtained.		x
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	x	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? In accordance with HO complaints handling code the third stage will be considered by the Board in March 2021. The Board will make a decision on whether stage 3 is needed.		x
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		x
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	x	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	x	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	1	
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	x	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	x	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	x	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	x	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? 2019/20 - 20/30 = 67%		

	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p>2019/20 – 10/30 = 33%</p>		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one 2019/20 – 5/20 = 25% • Stage one (with extension) 2019/20 15/20 = 75% • Stage two 2019/20 – 10/10 = 100% • Stage two (with extension) <p>When measuring against the previous 15 day target for 2019/20 we achieved 12/20 (60%) for stage one and 8/20 (40%) for stage one with extension.</p>		
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p>Where cases are complex and cover more than one service area timescales may be extended with the agreement of the complainant to ensure we can investigate thoroughly.</p>	x	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p>	x	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>In 2019/20, out of 16 survey forms that were sent out, there were only 6 returns.</p> <p>66.7% were very satisfied with the final outcome of their complaint</p>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p>*outside of Covid-19 lockdown</p>	x	
	<p>Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?</p> <p>Complaints officers explained that during Covid-19 lockdown it was harder to respond in time due to staff shortages etc. This was accepted by the Housing Ombudsman</p>	x	
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p>We receive complaints from MPs, Councillors and Citizens Advice where complainants have gone directly to them and we accept these as formal complaints.</p>	x	
	<p>If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?</p> <p>We give comprehensive advice within letters and use plain English</p>	x	

	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>In 2019/20 - of the 30 cases, we refused to escalate 8 (either at stage 1 or 2)</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p>Reasons given by complainant for escalation did not add any new information or evidence that had not already been considered in the investigator's response.</p>		
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	x	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>We will make any changes to processes or take appropriate steps where we have fallen short of our service standards, such as communication, training needs, repairs and housing related issues.</p>	x	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p>The need for good communication between teams. All conversations with customers to be confirmed via email or letter as this will avoid confusion and give clarity. Also having a dedicated case handler/point of contact, where the complaint falls over 2 or more service areas.</p> <p>Here are some examples of changes made following complaints:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Property was let with extensive condensation and black mould in an extension at the back of the property and referred to as a 'utility room' when let. We have amended the lettings procedure to ensure we are clear what is part of a dwelling for the purposes of a tenancy. This extension should have been explicitly referred to as not being part of the tenancy. 2) Repair invoice for £85 for a missed callout on resident's account. The resident had completed the work privately. Disputed at the time (2017), the resident didn't hear anything back so assumed Magna has accepted that the invoice was disputed. Charges on customer's accounts are now chased more frequently and not left on customer's accounts for long periods with no follow up notes of being chased. No proof that we had been chasing for the payment. This procedure has since been tightened up. 		

	<p>3) Customer requested to remove the two person warning marker filed on the system for their address and questioned whether the presence of the two person warning marker had any impact on the timing of relevant repairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk warning procedure amended to include the requirement and suggested wording for the notification to customers when a flag is raised against them, why it's raised, how it will be reviewed and how they can appeal. • Ensure formal and transparent review process involving people who have a good understanding of the process, the implications for the customer, the community and colleagues. Also knowledge of alternative and/or complementary actions. • Community Safety Team to be more proactive in adding customers where there are known risks to colleagues as a result of drug and alcohol use and where there is cuckooing/county lines activity. 		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? Opendoor magazine, Magna website and through Scrutiny group</p> <p>b) the board/governing body? Annual report on complaints in the year to Board and quarterly report to Board (Customer opinion report) and the Risk and Audit Committee</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? Annual financial statements (in strategic report section) signed off by the Board. Available to customers on our website.</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>x</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>We will make changes to formal complaints policy and procedure including adding definition, changes to timescales and adding in more information on apologising and finding remedies.</p>		