

# Self-Assessment statement on the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code – As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

This self-assessment has been carried out against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code - issued July 2020. It is a requirement that Landlords publish their self-assessment by 31 December 2020 and that work to update policy and procedures because of the self-assessment be carried out by 31 March 2021.

## Background

A working party of colleagues within Anchor Hanover was established to carry out a review of our compliance against the Code. This was a thorough exercise looking at each aspect of our approach to handling complaints. Colleagues reviewed existing policy (and related procedure and guidance material), examples of correspondence, investigated the complaint handling processes and considered how we managed and measured our performance. Anchor Hanover has always worked closely with the Housing Ombudsman service but still found areas within the Code where we could improve. Many of these changes have now been actioned.

Effective complaint management is important to us. Therefore in drafting a revised policy and process we have consulted widely both with residents and relevant senior manager groups within the business. This has delayed sign off on the revised policy, but we are now ready to submit the policy to our Board. This will happen during January 2021 and we anticipate publishing an updated statement following that meeting, showing us as being fully compliant.

Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments
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>		✓	<i>This definition is incorporated within the revised policy which is being submitted to our Board for sign off during January 2021.</i>
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?		✓	<i>A list of exclusions are incorporated within the revised policy which is being submitted to our Board for sign off during January 2021.</i>
Accessibility	Yes	No	
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	✓		
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	✓		
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	✓		

Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	✓		
<b>Complaints team and process</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	✓		
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	✓		
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	✓		
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		✓	Our complaints process has two stages. Residents however have an option of referring their complaint to Anchor Hanover's Independent Customer Complaints Panel (or to an MP or local councillor) before it's referred to the Housing Ombudsman. This is an alternative option to having to wait 8 weeks before referring their complaint to the Ombudsman.
Is any third stage optional for residents?		✓	See response above
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	✓		
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	✓		
At what stage are most complaints resolved?			93% of complaints were resolved at stage one during the year 2019 – 2020.
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints 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?	✓		
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	✓		100% were responded to within 5 days.
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	✓		
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	-	-	2199 (93%)
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	-	-	162 complaints (7%)
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?	-	-	Data below shows April 19 to April 20:
• Stage one	-	-	1978 complaints (84%)

Stage one (with extension)	-	-	221 complaints (9%)
• Stage two	-	-	145 complaints (6%)
Stage two (with extension)	-	-	17 complaints (1%)
Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	✓		Where timescales have to be extended, we use our holding letter procedure to set resident expectations.
Where timescales have been extended did, we keep the resident informed?	✓		
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	-	-	In our May 2020 survey, we asked residents: how satisfied they were with the way Anchor Hanover dealt with their complaint. Of those that responded they scored their satisfaction out of ten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants scored <b>7.3</b></li> <li>• Homeowners scored <b>5.6</b></li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		✓	We have not answered all requests within 15 days, as there have been some requests where we have needed more time. Where this was the case, we have worked with the Housing Ombudsman Service and agreed a new timescale.
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	✓		
<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	✓		
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	✓		
How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	-	-	We don't believe there are any that we have refused to escalate within the last few years.
Did we explain our decision to the resident?	-	-	N/a
<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	✓		
<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	-	-	We have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduced the Hate Crime Procedure.</li> <li>• made changes to policies and procedures.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>made changes to complaint letters and the process for checking them.</li> <li>reminded colleagues about the importance of a call during the complaints process.</li> </ul>
How do we share these lessons with;	-	-	
a) residents?	-	-	Through the annual report, Life Magazine, Independent Customer Complaints Panel and the Residents Council.
b) the board/governing body?	-	-	We provide regular reports to the Care Services Management Board, Housing Operations Board, Service Quality Committee and Executive Management Board.
c) In the Annual Report?	x		In our 2021 Annual report we have made a commitment to provide the results of the Insight Project. This project extracts learnings from complaints.
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	✓		
What changes have we made?	-	-	<p>We have made changes to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy, procedure and helpsheet,</li> <li>our website,</li> <li>developed a Reasonable Adjustments Policy,</li> <li>template letters,</li> <li>our internal toolkits to help colleagues answer complaints effectively,</li> <li>the way we share learnings from complaints.</li> </ul> <p>We have also developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>training for colleagues (letter writing and complaint responses)</li> <li>a satisfaction survey for residents that have gone through the complaints process.</li> </ul>