

### Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code / Self-assessment form

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>	Yes.	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p>Yes, there are the following exclusions –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters that have already been considered under our complaints policy</li> <li>• Complaints about anti-social behaviour or nuisance by Freebridge tenants. Such complaints will be handled by a separate anti-social behaviour policy and procedure. However, if the complaint is about the way in which the nuisance has been handled, then this will be covered by our complaint policy.</li> <li>• Initial requests for service or information. For example the initial reporting of a repair. However, when we fail to meet our service standards, this will be covered by our complaints policy.</li> <li>• Complaints where legal action is already taking place or a decision has been made by the court.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about our decision to end a starter tenancy; refusal to offer a tenancy after an applicant has been referred or nominated to us; a tenancy review; refusal of a mutual exchange – these would be dealt with under our appeals policy. However if the complaint is about the way in which the process has been handled, then this will be covered by the complaints policy.</li> </ul>	
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon.	Yes, these exclusions are fair as all have alternative methods of redress. Although their initial complaint may be referred to a separate policy, the complaints process remains open to them if they remain dissatisfied.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<p>Yes, tenants are able to raise a complaint in via the following means –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face to face</li> <li>Telephone</li> <li>Written letter / complaint form</li> <li>Email</li> <li>Twitter / Facebook</li> <li>Online complaint portal</li> </ul>	
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes - <a href="https://www.freebridge.org.uk/complaint.html">https://www.freebridge.org.uk/complaint.html</a>	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes. As outlined in our complaints leaflet, tenants are able to request reasonable adjustments or additional support at any point during the complaints process. Where we are aware that a reasonable adjustment may be required, we will seek to provide	

		<p>these proactively where possible. These adjustments include, but are not limited to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of auxiliary aids</li> <li>• Provision of information in alternative formats (large print, braille, coloured paper etc)</li> <li>• Allowing extra time for customers to make a response</li> <li>• Use of email or telephone in preference to hard copy letters</li> <li>• Use of plain English or an easy read service</li> <li>• Communication through a representative or intermediary</li> <li>• Rest or comfort breaks during meetings</li> </ul>	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes, the quarterly Streets Ahead magazine, issued to each of our tenanted households, includes a summary of the preceding quarter's complaint performance along with information on the complaint process itself.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes, a Customer Complaints Manager & Customer Complaints Co-Ordinator.	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		No, the Customer Complaints Manager & Complaint Co-Ordinator do not have autonomy to make decisions affecting other service areas to resolve a complaint. The Customer

			Complaints Manager/Complaint Co-Ordinator consult with the investigating officer and offer advice, however the investigating officer makes the final decision.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes, investigating officers from all departments are required to engage with the Complaints Manager/Complaints Co-Ordinator to ensure complaints are responded to and resolved within the service standard timeframe.	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		No
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes. Tenants are given information and the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman as part of the complaints leaflet issued with the initial Stage 1 Confirmation letter, and this information is reiterated as part of the Stage 2 formal response. This includes the Housing Ombudsman's postal address, telephone number and website.	

	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes, all letters, emails, pictures etc are kept in individual digital complaint files. Access to these files is restricted to ensure it complies with GDPR. Any formal correspondence is scanned and stored within each individual complaint file on Open Housing.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes, the Customer Complaints Manager & Complaint Co-Ordinator outline a point of contact for the customer to ensure they have regular updates throughout the process. The Customer Complaints Manager & Customer Complaint Co-Ordinator monitor each complaint to make sure that formal responses are issued within the timeframe outlined in our service standard.	
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	The investigating officer is required to contact the complainant as part of their investigation, with the intention to discuss the complaint in more detail and how we will look to resolve the complaint. The customer has the opportunity to dispute a proposed resolution at this point, and is given a further 10 working day timeframe to offer any dispute/challenge/further discussion upon the receipt of a formal response.	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes. This information is included in the complaints leaflet issued alongside the Stage 1 confirmation letter, and is reiterated as part of the Stage 1 & Stage 2 formal written response.	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	Since April 2021, 86% of formal complaints have been resolved at Stage 1.	

	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p>	<p>Since April 2021, 14% of formal complaints have been resolved at Stage 2.</p>	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>	<p>Stage 1 – Since April 2021, 43% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 10-day response target.</p> <p>Stage 2 – Since April 2021, 38% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the 10-day response target.</p>	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p>	<p>Reduced staffing capacity has recently put the onus onto senior managers to investigate complaints, resulting in a significant number of complaints receiving responses outside of the service standard timeframe.</p> <p>Alongside business restructuring currently underway, new Team Leaders have been brought on-board whose responsibilities will include investigating and monitoring new complaints in each of their service areas, which has already started to improve the response rate and overall handling of complaints.</p> <p>Additional capacity within the complaints team is also being introduced.</p>	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p>	<p>Yes. Where we are aware of a delay in issuing a full response, a holding letter is sent with an extended target response date, no later than 10 working days after the original date.</p>	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents'</p>	<p>The complaints handling satisfaction rate from April is an average of 62%.</p>	

	satisfaction		
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes, although permission would need to have been granted by the tenant to allow us to discuss details of their account with their representative.	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes, any advice is given in plain English and, where possible, accompanied by additional supporting information. Customers are also encouraged to contact either the Customer Complaint Manager or Customer Complaint Co-Ordinator to discuss any aspect of a response that they do not understand.	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?	Since April 2021, we have not refused to escalate any complaints.	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	NA	
<b>7</b>	<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?	Yes, actions are taken to put right any issues that have resulted in a complaint. Wherever possible, learning is taken from complaints so that we can improve our service and avoid the same issue reoccurring.	

8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No
	<p>What improvements have we made because of learning from complaints?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructuring to combine our Customer Services Department and Property Services Scheduling &amp; Administrative Departments to improve the communication and efficiency of our repairs service for customers</li> <li>• Growth within the complaints department with a new customer complaints manager appointed. Also an advert for a second complaint coordinator.</li> <li>• Fully revised pet guidance leaflet</li> <li>• Procedural change to tenancy breach cases necessitating the Tenancy Manager to undertake a review and ensure home visits are completed</li> <li>• Amended property-advertising procedure to introduce double-checking of the property details before publishing the advert</li> <li>• A stock of oil filled temporary heaters to be kept in the event of electric fan heaters being unsuitable due to customer vulnerabilities</li> <li>• A stock of water cylinders being kept in stock to reduce the wait time for vulnerable customers in the event of a replacement being required</li> <li>• Review and implementation of new procedures when clearing belongings from recently vacated properties</li> <li>• Review of procedure when referring responsive repairs to planned works</li> <li>• Review of procedure for abandonment of jobs on Open Housing</li> </ul>	



	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents?</p> <p>b) the board/governing body?</p> <p>c) in the Annual Report?</p>	<p>Residents – The quarterly Streets Ahead magazine is issued to each tenanted household. The information is also featured in the quarterly complaints and compliments reports that is published and discussed within our tenant panel.</p> <p>The Board – The quarterly complaints and compliment reports.</p> <p>Annual Report – Data is included in the report as well as a link to the quarterly complaints and compliments reports on the website.</p>	
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p>Yes – several actions undertaken to further improve our processes, in addition to an ongoing continuous improvement action plan.</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p>	<p>As above</p>	