

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code / Self-assessment form

1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Action
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><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>Our definition is currently “When the customer is unhappy about the service they have received from us”.</p>		<p>Definition to be changed to match the Ombudsman definition</p> <p>[Target 30/11/2020 - ACTION COMPLETED]</p>
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p>Yes, the following exclusions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about anti-social behaviour or nuisance by Freebridge Tenants, unless the complaint is about the way in which the nuisance has been handled. • Initial requests for service or information. 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complaints where legal action is already taking place, or a decision has been made by the court. •Complaints about our decision to end a starter tenancy; refusal to offer a tenancy after the applicant has been referred or nominated to us; a tenancy review; refusal of a mutual exchange. <p>All exclusions are made on the basis that the customer has an alternative method of redress outside of the complaints process.</p>		
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon.	<p>Yes. As stated above, all categories of concern have alternative methods of redress.</p> <p>From analysing past data, in 2019/20 all complaints offered were accepted with the exception of one, which was referred to our appeals process instead.</p>		
2	Accessibility	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<p>Yes, tenants are able to raise a complaint via the following means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face • Telephone • Written letter • Email 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter / Facebook • Online complaint portal 		
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes; https://www.freebridge.org.uk/complaint.html		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure to be summarised in a customer facing leaflet, available on the website. • Website content to be refreshed. <p>[Target 31/12/2020 – ACTION COMPLETED]</p>
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Not a specific policy but reasonable adjustments are covered in the Complaints Policy		<p>Reasonable adjustments Section to be included within Complaints Policy.</p> <p>[Target 31/12/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]</p>
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes, in every addition of our customer magazine 'Streets Ahead', our website and our customer handbooks.		<p>Contents of Handbooks to be refreshed.</p> <p>[Target 31/12/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]</p>

3	Complaints team and process	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes, the Complaint Co-Ordinator.		
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?		No, the Complaint Co-Ordinator does not have autonomy to make decisions affecting other service areas to resolve a complaint. Instead, the Complaint Co-Ordinator offers advice and coordinates the response to the complainant, but the investigating officer makes the final decision.	<p>Approach to be reviewed as part of current ongoing work around organisational design.</p> <p>[Target 31/03/2021]</p> <p>Update 07/04/2021: Work on organisational design ongoing.</p> <p>[Revised Target 30/06/2021]</p>
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes, complaints procedure requires the investigating manager to engage with the Complaints Co-Ordinator throughout the process.		See action above.
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision		No, the procedure has two stages however 1) the Tenant Panel and Customer Services	

	making?		Committee receive detailed quarterly reports regarding complaints for indirect engagement, as well as copies of any Ombudsman investigations 2) the complainant themselves is engaged throughout the process.	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No – our complaints leaflet explains the further, independent options available instead.	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes, tenants are given the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman in the complaint leaflet at the start of their complaint.		Our Complaints leaflet is to be revised to expand on HO role as intermediary in the complaint process prior to formal engagement. [Target 31/12/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes, all letters, emails, pictures etc are kept in the individual digital complaint file. Access is restricted to this file to ensure it complies with GDPR. Any correspondence sent by Freebridge is scanned and stored digitally on our electronic data management system.		

4	Communication	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes, the Complaint Co-Ordinator ensures that complainants are given regular updates and official responses within the timescales set by 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?	<p>Yes, tenants are given the opportunity to contact the Customer Services Manager and/or Complaint Co-Ordinator to discuss/query/challenge the Stage 1 response.</p> <p>If the tenant remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be escalated to Stage 2 for a Director to make a final decision.</p>		<p>Procedure to be amended to require that the investigating manager/Director engages independently with the customer at each stage, as well as any members of staff directly involved in the complaint, prior to reaching a conclusion or decision on the case.</p> <p>[Target 31/12/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]</p>
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes.		

	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes, complainants are advised on how to progress their complaint if they remain unsatisfied following a response.		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	Since April 2019, 81% of formal complaints have been resolved at stage 1.		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	Since April 2019, 19% of formal complaints have progressed to stage 2.		
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one • Stage one (with extension) • Stage two • Stage two (with extension) 	<p>Stage 1: Since April 2019, 59% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 10 day response target.</p> <p>Stage 1 (with extension): Since April 2019, 60% of stage 1 complaints that received a holding letter were responded to by the agreed extended target date.</p> <p>Stage 2: Since April 2019, 92% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within the 10 day response target.</p> <p>Stage 2 (with extension): Since April 2019, 100% of stage 2 complaints that received a holding letter were responded to by the agreed extended target date.</p>		<p>See action above re. Complaints Co-Ordinator autonomy and jurisdiction.</p> <p>Complaints Procedure to be amended to add in requirement for Complaints Co-Ordinator to escalate complaint investigations to the relevant service Director one working day before deadline to avoid compliance failure.</p> <p>[Target 31/12/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]</p>

	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?		On occasions extensions have been made as a result of workload rather than a delay in information being received as part of the investigation.	See action above.
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes.		Policy to be amended to include timescale for extension. [Target 30/11/2020 ACTION COMPLETED]
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	To be collected from April 2021		Post complaint satisfaction surveying to be established. [Target 31/03/2021 ACTION COMPLETED – commences April 2021]

5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes.		
6	Fairness in complaint handling	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes, although permission would need to have been granted by the complainant to allow us to discuss details of their complaint 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 information. Complainants are also encouraged to contact either the Customer Services Manager or Complaint Co-Ordinator to discuss any aspect of a response that they do not understand.		<p>Policy to include a section on reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>[Target 30/11/2020 – ACTION COMPLETED]</p> <p>Revised Complaints Leaflet to be reviewed and signed off by the Tenants Panel</p>

				[Target 31/01/2021 ACTION COMPLETED]
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	None to date; now recorded.		System used to record complaints to be amended to include facility to record non escalation. [Target 31/03/2021] Update 07/04/2021: System work ongoing but now recorded manually in interim. [Revised Target 30/06/2021]
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?		Not applicable.	See above action.
7	Outcomes and remedies	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things	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		

	right?	service and avoid the same issue reoccurring. Learning outcomes and actions are recorded in the quarterly report to Board and our Tenant Panel.		
8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No	Further actions to be taken
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural changes regarding garage site demolitions. • Additional training to improve tenant communications, including managing tenant expectations, improving customer care and re-balancing the people talk/technical talk aspects of communications. • Adjustments to the contract for lift maintenance to reduce the timeframe of repairs. • Changes to processes when working with the local Home Improvement Agency - Care & Repair. • Improvements made to the amount of work picked up and completed at the empty property stage to ensure that incoming tenants are not chasing outstanding repairs or are made aware of works that are due as part of a planned programme. • Improvements to the handling of follow-on repairs by Team Leaders. Additional 		<p>Internal Assurance programme, to follow up on learning outcomes and demonstrate evidence of implementation and improvement, to be established via in house Business Assurance Team.</p> <p>[Target 31/03/2021]</p> <p>Update 07/04/2021: Learning recommendations & action log established and process agreed to review on a monthly basis. Reviews to commence 30/04/2021.</p>

		<p>monitoring is in place to avoid follow-on works being delayed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more pro-active approach has been implemented for Property Services Team Leaders to monitor the productivity and workloads of their teams. 		[Revised Target 30/06/2021]
	<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>a) residents – via the quarterly Streets Ahead magazine, and quarterly complaints and compliments reports on the website.</p> <p>b) the board/governing body – via quarterly complaints and compliment reports.</p> <p>c) in the Annual Report – annual data is included in the report, as well as a link to the quarterly complaints and compliments reports on the website.</p>		
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?		Yes – see actions outlined throughout self-assessment.	
	What changes have we made?		See responses throughout self-assessment as above.	