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| **Self Assessment Form – date completed 29/07/2020 SSHA & Severnside** | | | |
| **Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code** | | | |
| 1 | **Definition of a complaint** | **Yes** | **No** |
|  | Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?  *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*. |  | No |
| The HPG complaint definition is  *An expression of concern or dissatisfaction, however made, which requires a response and is about something which we, as a company, have direct control.* |
|  | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | Yes |  |
|  | Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? | yes |  |
| Evidence relied upon   1. There is an alternative route for redress e.g. alternative policy that should be used 2. Where a complaint has already exhausted the complaints process they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. |
| 2 | **Accessibility** |  |  |
|  | Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? | Yes |  |
| Complaints can be made via phone, face to face, online via web form, email to complaints team or letter.  Complaints can also be made via an advocate providing we have an authority to act. |
|  | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | Yes |  |
|  | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? |  | No |
|  | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? |  | No |
| 3 | **Complaints team and process** |  |  |
|  | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? | Yes |  |
| A complaints officer and complaint manager have been in post since January 2019 |
|  | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?  . |  | No |
| Complaint investigation lies with the service line to investigate and resolve at all levels. |
|  | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? | Yes |  |
| The complaint officer can insist that parties from other departments liaise with each other and where this may not be happening they can convene a meeting of all parties to discuss to reach a resolution. |
|  | If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? | Yes |  |
| The third stage is a panel made up of two residents for the scrutiny panel and a Board member. However a Director will make a decision on whether or not complaint should go to a panel. |
|  | Is any third stage optional for residents? |  | No |
| The third stage is not optional for a resident if they wish to exhaust the complaints process, however a Director decides whether or not a complaint should go to a panel |
|  | 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 incusing correspondence from the resident? | Yes |  |
|  | At what stage are most complaints resolved? | Stage 1 |  |
| 4 | **Communication** |  |  |
|  | Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? |  | No |
| The complaints team will send out any holding letters where a complaint is being extended.  It is down to the service investigating the complaint to ensure that customers are kept updated of their complaint and any subsequent remedy |
|  | Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? | Yes |  |
| The investigating officer will liaise with the customer to get their position on the complaint and then send their response. The customer has the opportunity to excavate this to a stage 2 of they are dissatisfied. |
|  | Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?  Our complaints policy is to acknowledge a complaint within 2 working days. There are occasions where we go over this by a day but we still acknowledge within 5 working days | Yes |  |
|  | Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | Yes |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? | 90% |  |
| At end of 2019/20 90% of complaints were resolved at stage 1 |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? | 98% |  |
| At end of 2019/20 98% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 as 2% escalated to Level 3 |
|  | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  Timescales as at end of 2019/20  • Stage one 57%  Stage one (with extension) 88%  • Stage two 66.67%  Stage two (with extension) 100% |  |  |
|  | Where timescales have been extended, did we have good reason? |  | No not always |
| There have been occasions where extensions have been requested due to staff holidays, not having enough time due to other priorities, or overlooking the complaint. |
|  | Where timescales have been extended did, we keep the resident informed? | Yes |  |
| Holding letters are sent in every occasion where a service requests an extension of time unless the investigating officer has already spoken to the customer. Unfortunately investigating officers so not always request extensions and allow a complaint to go overdue. |
|  | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents’  satisfaction? |  |  |
| Customer satisfaction on complaint handling at the end of 2019/20 was 51% (78% excluding those dissatisfied with the outcome) |
| 5 | **Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service** |  |  |
|  | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? |  | No |
|  | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | Yes |  |
| 6 | **Fairness in complaint handling** |  |  |
|  | Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? | Yes |  |
| An authority to act is required |
|  | If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? | Yes |  |
| In June 2020 we carried out a survey of customers who have completed the complaints process in the last 12 months. We asked them “Was it clear from the information provided, the different ways to make a complaint?”  68% ssha customer said it was clear/fairly clear  66% Severnside customer said it was clear/fairly clear |
|  | How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal? | 12 |  |
| We have only refused to escalate complaints at Level 3. They were reviewed, however, by a Director rather than a panel. In 2019/20, 12 Level 3 complaints were refused on the basis that there had been a robust investigation at Level 2 and it was felt that a Level 3 panel hearing would not change the outcomes. |
|  | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | Yes |  |
| 7 | **Outcomes and remedies** |  |  |
|  | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | Yes |  |
| Sometimes there is a delay in providing the remedy especially if it is a complex repair and the Investigating Officer does not always monitor the remedy to conclusion. |
| 8 | **Continuous learning and improvement** |  |  |
|  | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? |  |  |
| During 2019/20 a number of improvements have been made to the complaints process in response to learning from complaints:   * Introducing forthcoming reminders at day 6 and 8 to improve performance of complaints responded to within the 10 working day timescale * Weekly review meetings with service areas to monitor and discuss open cases through to closure * Amending Level 3 complaint process in response to customers feedback so that customers who are unable to attend the panel hearing in person or by way of a conference call, who do not have sufficient time to make written representations, can make representation over the phone. * Quality checking of all response letters to ensure they answer all points of the complaint with any gaps being sent back to the investigating officer to address. This measure has been introduced in response to customers telling us that sometimes complaint responses do not answer all the points they had raised in their complaint. * Introduction of a compensation policy to ensure consistency in awarding financial payments in complaint remedies * Training for surveyors, along with the provision of testing equipment, in response to complaints about damp and mould enabling them to complete surveys in house without the need to refer to external contractors. |
|  | How do we share these lessons with?   1. Residents? 2. The board/governing body? 3. In the annual report? |  |  |
| The lessons learnt are shared in the annual report that goes to Board.  Lessons learnt are not currently shared with customers |
|  | Has the code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | Yes |  |
|  | What changes have we made?  We have produced a new complaints policy that was approved at Board in November 2020 to go live on 1 April 2021. This is a group wide policy to include SARH and the changes bought about by the Housing Ombudsman code which include:   * A two stage process * The universal definition of a complaint * Revised timescales to respond to a complaint * Extension reasons * Reasonable exclusions * How we deal with Unreasonable Behaviour   We are working with services to implement action plans to ensure we meet the response timescales |  |  |