

## Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code South Kesteven Housing Services Self-Assessment Form 2021

### Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

South Kesteven District Council's Housing Service is committed to being compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

### Why are we doing this

The Housing Ombudsman Service looks at complaints about housing services that have been reported to them.

All social landlords are registered with the Housing Ombudsman.

Any tenant has the right to complain to their landlord about the service they have received.

If they are not satisfied with the response given to their complaint, they have the right to report it to the Housing Ombudsman who will investigate it with the landlord on the tenant's behalf.

The Housing Ombudsman has introduced a new Complaint Handling Code that sets out good practice and standards that we should meet to enable tenants to make a complaint to us.

Part of this is to review our current procedure for dealing with complaints and how we will ensure we meet the requirements of this new code. We are required to do this by carrying out a self-assessment that tells people how we currently meet this code and the actions we will take to make us complainant where we are not.

This is the first of regular self-assessments that we will carry out to ensure we continue to meet the requirements this code and deal with complaints in line with our procedure and standards.

Where it is necessary or we believe it will provide an improved service, we will change our procedure each time we carry out this self-assessment.

	<b>Question</b>	<b>How we currently comply</b>	<b>Action required to ensure compliance</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>			
1.1	<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>	<p>Yes</p> <p>“a standard of service, a failure to meet your expectations, an action or a lack of action or because you found it difficult to access our services – anything which you feel is unacceptable”</p>	<p>We will review our definition to match that of the Housing Ombudsman.</p>	<p>Included in new policy</p>
1.2	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>Included in new policy</p>
1.3	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon.</p>	<p>Yes – Our procedure sets out reasons as ‘Where the report is an initial request for service or where a statutory appeals process is available.’</p>	<p>None Required.</p>	<p>Complete</p>

<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>			
2.1	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes – written, phone, online, email, verbal, in person.	We will ensure this is made clearer on the SKDC website and in leaflets and posters.	Action: To have information more prominent on website
2.2	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	We will place this Council's website under housing pages. southkesteven.gov.uk/housingsupport	Action: Policy and summary of procedure to go on once approved
2.3	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes	We will clarify in the procedure how we address anything that may prevent a tenant making a complaint.	Included in new policy
2.4	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	The process is online, and we explain to tenants how they can complain in our newsletter and letters where appropriate.	Ongoing via skyline and advice to tenants.
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>			

3.1	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes – Our customer services team are the first point of contact for complaints to be received and recorded. The Director of Housing and Service Managers are responsible for ensuing complaints are resolved.	Complaints are dealt with by service managers and team leaders. We will ensure clear contacts are provided.  Complaints will be coordinated by an officer designated as the Housing Complaints Handler.	Complaints Handling coordinator in place and reporting procedures set up via monthly report and quarterly report.
3.2	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	The above contacts can resolve low level and Stage 1 complaints. Stage 2 complaints will be dealt with by a senior manager.	Complaints can be resolved by the officer dealing with it.
3.3	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	Complaints are dealt with across other departments where necessary.	Coordinated via housing
3.4	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	The corporate procedure includes a third stage that is dealt with by a Director. The complainant is involved in the final decision part this stage.	The new housing complaints policy will consist of two stages.	Included in new policy

3.5	Is any third stage optional for residents?	The corporate policy allows for a third stage.	The new housing complaints policy is a two-stage process. On completion of this the complainant is advised on how to take their complaint to either the designated person or Ombudsman stage.	Included in the new policy. Designated Person or ombudsman option.
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3.6	Does the final stage response set out the residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes	None required.	Included on letters sent
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3.7	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes – all records relating to a complaint are recorded on our customer management system.	A case file is opened and maintained for each complaint or feedback.	In place.
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3.8	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Stage 1	None Required.	No action required.
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**Communication**

4.1	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Partial – tenants are informed of the final response at Stage 1 but are kept informed before this throughout further stages.	Complainants will be contacted at Stage 1 and kept informed of progress throughout the complaint.	Being put in place. Coordinator will contact complainant
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				in 1st instance.
4.2	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Partial – we discuss the proposed final response with the complainant at Stage 2 and Stage 3.	The new process offers the opportunity to discuss the decision before it is made final at both stages.	Included in new policy
4.3	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	None required.	Done via civica.
4.4	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	None required.	Included with response.
4.5	What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage 1?	98% (based on complaint made over the last 18 months).	None required.	Monitored ongoing.
4.6	What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage 2?	90% (based on those that were escalated to stage 3).	None required.	Monitored ongoing
4.7	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage 1</li> <li>Stage 1 (with extension)</li> <li>Stage 2</li> <li>Stage 2 (with extension)</li> </ul>	75% Not collected 90% Not collected	We will review the reasons why a complaint may not be resolved within the timescale.	Monitored ongoing.

4.8	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes	None required.	Included in new policy
4.9	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes – We explain that a case may take longer than the given timescale to resolve.	We will inform the complainant of any delay at all stages and the reasons why.	Included in new policy
4.10	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	We do not collect this at the moment but less than 10% of complaints are escalated further.	We will conduct satisfaction feedback with complainants at the conclusion of their complaint.	To be started.

## 5 Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service

5.1	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes	None required.	Timescales met.
5.2	Where the timescale was extended, did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes – where we have to extend the timescale, we will tell them.	None required.	We will where required.

## 6 Fairness in complaint handling

6.1	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	None required.	Included in new policy
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6.2	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes	We will introduce templates to ensure this is consistent.	Template complaint response done
6.3	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	None – we escalate to next stage if requested.	None required.	Included in new policy
6.4	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes	None required.	Would be part of response

## 7 Outcomes and remedies

7.1	Where something has gone wrong, are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	We have introduced a new reporting form that captures outcomes and lessons learned, and what we have done regarding this.	Report is completed on civica at closure of complaint.
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## 8 Continuous learning and improvement

8.1	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	Improved training and procedures where required.	As above, we will record these to ensure we are able to monitor them.	As above
8.2	How do we share these lessons with?			Corporate report is made

	<p>a) Residents?</p> <p>b) The board/governing body?</p> <p>c) In the Annual Report?</p>	<p>We explain to the complainant in our response.</p> <p>Corporate report.</p> <p>On a corporate level.</p>	<p>We will provide regular reports in our newsletters and on our website as part of an improved reporting process on complaints.</p> <p>Complaints handling performance is reported to the corporate management and housing performance on complaints handling is part of the quarterly reports presented to management.</p>	<p>to senior management team. We will include information in skyline.</p>
8.3	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	<p>Yes - We are reviewing how we handle complaints within the Housing Service.</p> <p>We will also adapt the Ombudsman complaint letter template to ensure consistency and clear responses.</p>	<p>We have introduced a new procedure for housing complaints to help officers resolve complaints.</p>	<p>New policy and reporting processes.</p>
8.4	What changes have we made?	<p>We maintain a monitoring spreadsheet for all complaints and have introduced a new complaint recording form to ensure we learn from them.</p>	<p>We will review our complaint handling process and improve it where necessary.</p>	<p>Ongoing as part of new policy</p>

		A Complaints Handling Officer has been designated to ensure a more coordinated approach to complaints.	We collate and report on performance handling as part of an internal report.  We will conduct feedback surveys to capture satisfaction at how we handle complaints.	
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