

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Ipswich Borough Council Self-assessment March 2021

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments
	<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>A complaint is defined as:</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 or group.'</i></p>
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes		
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon: exclusions have been kept to a minimum and have been clearly identified and explained in the complaint's procedure. Alternative routes for these exclusions are given.</p>	Yes		<p>Exclusions relied upon are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requests for service change or improvement • requests for information or an explanation of Council policy or practice • matters where there is a formal right of appeal (such as a planning decision, a parking penalty charge notice of benefit application).
2	Accessibility	Yes	No	Comments
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes		<p>Complaints can be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online • In writing • In person

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By phone <p>If a customer makes contact to complain in person, or by phone, they will be directed to complete the complaints online form or to send the complaint in writing. This is to ensure that there is a full audit trail of information captured to allow the Council to follow the complaints procedure, fully investigate and to provide a full response.</p> <p>The Council is committed to promoting equality by ensuring equal access to our complaints procedure, where it is not possible for someone to make a complaint in writing or online the Council will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individuals need.</p>
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes		
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Yes		
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?		No	<p>The Council's website includes information on how to raise a complaint. The procedure is easily found and downloadable.</p> <p>The Council does not regularly advise residents about our complaint's procedure. The Ombudsman advised that it should be published in leaflets, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.</p> <p>Opportunities available for regularly advising residents about our complaints process will be looked at.</p>

3	Complaints team and process	Yes	No	Comments
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes		
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes		
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes		
	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure?	Yes		
	Are residents involved in the decision making?		No	<p>The Ombudsman considers the involvement of residents to be an effective part of managing disputes and a sign of a healthy complaint-handling culture. There is no requirement in the Code to have resident involvement in the complaint procedure although it is something that is encouraged.</p> <p>The Council will be establishing a Tenant Panel in 21/22 to provide overview and scrutiny of the Complaint process.</p>
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No	<p>The third stage is not optional.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman does not believe a third stage is necessary as part of the complaints process.</p> <p>The Council believes a third stage is required as that gives the final view of the Chief Executive Officer.</p>
	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 including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?			Stage 1
4	Communication	Yes	No	Comments
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?		No	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five 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?			The self-assessment covered the reporting period of April – September 2020 Number received - 48 Number escalated - 5 90% resolved
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			The self-assessment covered the reporting period of April – September 2020 Number received - 5 Number escalated - 1 80% resolved
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?			The self-assessment covered the reporting period of April – September 2020

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% (18 of the 48 received were responded to within 10 days) • n/a as the Council do not apply extensions • 80% (within the 20 days) • n/a as the Council do not apply extensions
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?			<p>The Council does not record extensions of complaints, they will show as a missed deadline.</p> <p>An extension process will be added into the Complaints procedure from 1st April 2021 and reasons recorded.</p>
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?			<p>Not recorded - we do not have a formal process agreed for extending deadlines.</p> <p>An extension process will be added into the Complaints procedure from 1st April 2021.</p>
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			<p>We do not record this however the number of cases not escalated could show satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 – 90% • Stage 2 – 80%
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes	No	Comments
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?			<p>Unknown – we do not record this information.</p> <p>The Council will start to record this information for 21/22.</p>

	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?			Unknown – we do not record this information The Council will start to record this information for 21/22.
6	Fairness in complaint handling	Yes	No	Comments
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes		A complaint can be made on behalf of the complainant with their permission
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?			Complaints are signed off at Stage 2 to ensure advice is accurate and easy to understand.
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?			Unknown – this information is not recorded. The Council will consider ways of recording this.
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?			As above
7	Outcomes and remedies	Yes	No	Comments
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes		Yes, but no detail is recorded. The Council will start to record this information for 21/22.
8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No	Comments
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			This information is not recorded. The Ombudsman encourages landlords to use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.

				The Council will start to record this information for 21/22 to demonstrate what improvements have been made as a result of learning from complaints.
	<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>The Council only report numbers of complaints received and % responded to on time.</p> <p>The Code requires a landlord to share its learning with residents, including a specific requirement to include any organisational learning in its Annual Report. The Ombudsman recognises that it may be difficult for some landlords to include this information in the Annual Report for 2020/21. They would expect to see this information included in future Annual Reports.</p> <p>The Council will include this information in our annual report from 2021/22</p>
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes		The code has been useful in allowing the Council to assess and improve the way it manages complaints
	What changes have we made?			<p>1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Complaints policy has been approved and includes a definition of a complaint. • The Complaints procedure has been updated to reflect the new response timescales • A Reasonable Adjustment Policy has been approved