

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

Self-assessment form - Epping Forest District Council

| Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code | | | |
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| 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> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: Our current definition is very similar and covers the points in definition above. However, we will be looking at revising the wording in the annual review due early 2021.</p> <p>Our Complaints Policy definition states: We want to provide you with the best possible service at all times, however we appreciate that sometimes things can go wrong. If there is a problem, we need you to tell us so that we can investigate, put things right and learn from it so that we can continuously improve our service to you. We understand you will be unhappy if you believe we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not carried out an action in a timely manner • Done something we should not have done • Not done something that you feel we should have done • Behaved inappropriately (staff or contractors) <p>This policy explains how you can make a complaint, how we will investigate and respond to your concerns and how you can progress the matter if you remain dissatisfied. It also covers what types of issues the complaints process can address and what it cannot.</p> <p>We also add the following text to housing newsletters and correspondence: If you are dissatisfied about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by us, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, please get in touch.</p> | ✓ | |
| | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | ✓ | |
| | <p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>Evidence relied upon:</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: Initial reports of a problem or request for service are excluded. Examples include reporting a missed bin collection, fly tipping or an abandoned vehicle; reporting a problem with your property</p> | ✓ | |

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| | that requires repair; reporting antisocial behaviour or noise nuisance; and other initial reports of problems. You should always raise this either via our website or calling our Customer Contact Centre. If you have previously reported a problem but feel that the appropriate action has not been taken, then you can raise this as a complaint. | | |
| 2 | Accessibility | | |
| | Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? EFDC RESPONSE: E-form via website, email, post or by telephone. | ✓ | |
| | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | ✓ | |
| | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? EFDC RESPONSE: This is covered in our general Equality Information Report/Policy but we are also preparing a reasonable adjustments section to be included in the Complaints Policy in the review, due early 2021. | ✓ | |
| | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? EFDC RESPONSE The complaints process is readily available on our website. Details of the complaints process is also communicated periodically in all Housing Tenant Newsletters and we are considering adding details to our housing standard letters. | ✓ | |
| 3 | Complaints team and process | | |
| | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? | ✓ | |
| | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? EFDC RESPONSE: The Complaints Officer assigns the complaint for resolution to the appropriate Manager or Senior Officer. | | ✓ |
| | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? EFDC RESPONSE: The Complaints Officer does work with other departments where necessary to ensure all information is gathered to resolve accordingly. | ✓ | |
| | If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? EFDC RESPONSE: It is a two-stage formal process within the Council. | | ✓ |
| | Is any third stage optional for residents? | | ✓ |
| | Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? EFDC RESPONSE: | ✓ | |

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| | <p>This is what we say in our stage final response: “If you still disagree with the outcome of our investigations into your complaint and feel you have evidence and clear reasons why, you can choose to pursue your complaint by contacting the Housing/Local Government Ombudsman, whose details are below. Housing Ombudsman: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or telephone 0300 111 3000. Local Government Ombudsman: www.lgo.org.uk or telephone 0300 061 0614.</p> | | |
| | Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? | ✓ | |
| | <p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE 90% of complaints received during 2020 resolved at Stage 1</p> | | |
| 4 | Communication | | |
| | Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? | ✓ | |
| | <p>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> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: Any challenge or dispute is following the final Stage 1 or Stage 2 response.</p> | | ✓ |
| | Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? | ✓ | |
| | Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | ✓ | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: 90%</p> | | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: 10%</p> | | |
| | <p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage one – resolved within 10 working days Stage one (with extension) – appropriate time limit set by the investigating Manager/Senior officer 93% within timescales Stage two – Resolved within 15 working days Stage two (with extension) - appropriate time limit set by the investigating Manager 58% within timescales | | |
| | Where timescales have been extended did, we have good reason? | ✓ | |

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| | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? | ✓ | |
| | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction? EFDC RESPONSE: 36% of complaints upheld and partially upheld 2020. | | |
| 5 | Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service | | |
| | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? | ✓ | |
| | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | ✓ | |
| 6 | Fairness in complaint handling | | |
| | Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? EFDC RESPONSE: Our policy states: You should make your complaint yourself, unless there is a good reason why you need to ask someone else to do this for you. If you do want someone else to complain on your behalf, please contact us to give permission for us to discuss your complaint with the third party. Residents can respond once their final response has been issued. They can contact the complaint mailbox or the investigating manager if they have additional information or questions. | ✓ | |
| | If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? | ✓ | |
| | How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal? EFDC RESPONSE: We do not have specific numbers, however the number is low and the only reason an escalation to stage 2 is refused is if the resident cannot give sufficient "good reason" to the resolution points given in the stage 1 final response. | | |
| | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | ✓ | |
| 7 | Outcomes and remedies | | |
| | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | ✓ | |
| 8 | Continuous learning and improvement | | |
| | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? EFDC RESPONSE: Feedback has been given to officers where the complaint is about behaviour. Managers are currently going through difficult conversation training with a profession training company. Team Managers are having more meetings to understand caseload and specific cases which could escalate to complaint how to mitigate this with clear communication and managing | | |

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| | expectations. | | |
| | <p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) residents? Lessons learnt and remedial actions are included in the final response. b) the board/governing body? Commentary is given in the quarterly report. c) In the Annual Report? Commentary summarised from quarterly reports. | | |
| | <p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: Yes. Responses are more structured, clearer and residents' expectations are being managed due to specific timeframes.</p> | ✓ | |
| | <p>What changes have we made?</p> <p>EFDC RESPONSE: Templates created for Managers to use for all parts of the process from stage 1 through to stage 2.</p> <p>Managers receive training on the process and our in-house complaints CRM which sends "to-do" notifications.</p> | | |