

Effectively Handling Complaints in Social Housing: Overcoming Key Challenges

Rebecca Reed, Head of Insight and
Development

Our service

- ▶ All social landlords in England must be members of the 'Housing Ombudsman Scheme'
- ▶ 2,230 social landlords (326 LAs), plus 73 voluntary private landlords, covering 4.7m households
- ▶ Vision - to improve lives and housing services (using complaints)
- ▶ Proactive Ombudsman with a dual role
- ▶ Promote learning from complaints, deliver training, undertake deeper investigations into systemic and thematic issues

Ombudsman Scheme

- ▶ Came into effect on 1 September 2020
- ▶ Landlords expected to deal with complaints in line with both the Scheme and the Complaint Handling Code
- ▶ New power to issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order
- ▶ New power to carry out a wider investigation where there is evidence of 'a systemic failing'

The Complaint Handling Code and its aims

- ▶ Framework to promote high-quality complaint handling and positive complaints culture
- ▶ Universal definition of a complaint
- ▶ 2 stages
- ▶ Greater access and consistency
- ▶ Greater awareness of the complaints system
- ▶ Faster resolution of complaints with appropriate remedies
- ▶ Use learning from complaints to drive service improvements
- ▶ Set the right culture; relevant to boards as well as frontline staff
- ▶ Differs from other best practice – it's a requirement



Complaint Handling Failure Orders

Non-compliance without good reason with the Complaint Handling Code

Inaccessible complaint process

Not accepting a valid complaint

Not progressing a complaint

Failing to provide evidence to support investigation

A landlord's complaint handling failure record will be reported to the RSH and will form part of the landlord reports published by Ombudsman.

Systemic Investigations

Paragraph 50 of the Scheme

Allows us to investigate potential root causes of complaints

Themes and trends in complaints

Identifying and sharing best practice

Possible referral to the regulator

Reports, guidance and learning

Insight and Learning

Individual case determinations published

Insight reports

Thematic reports

Landlord complaint information

Webinars/podcasts

Landlord complaint handling good practice

- ▶ Seek clarification of complaint/outcome
- ▶ Set out obligations and manage expectations
- ▶ Clear information on process
- ▶ Proportionality in approach
- ▶ Be fair, flexible and reasonable
- ▶ Evidence-based decisions (record keeping)
- ▶ Effective remedies
- ▶ Don't delay outcome due to outstanding actions
- ▶ Be 'human' - consider tone
- ▶ Manage unreasonable behaviour

Five take-aways

Get it right at the start

Effective and continuous communication

Policies and procedures

Governance

Record keeping

Thank you

Rebecca Reed
Head of Insight and Development
0300 111 3000

RReed@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk



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