

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

## Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
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><u>Extract from THT's Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure:</u> A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Taunton Heritage Trust.</p> <p>In relation to a complaint from a Resident, The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code states that:</p> <p>'A complaint shall be defined as 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.</p> <p>The Resident does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such.'</p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p><u>Extract from THT's Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure:</u> The Trust will not be able to deal with an issue through the Complaints Procedure if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legal proceedings have been started</li> <li>- The complainant is anonymous, unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint</li> <li>- The issue has already been considered</li> <li>- The issue occurred 6 months or more ago</li> <li>- The issue is a recurring one</li> </ul> <p>If the Trust decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided setting out the reason why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.</p>	Yes	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p>The THT will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so – the above exclusions are reasonable and fair and as they relate to either legal or timescale matters.</p> <p>Evidence relied upon THT staff keep detailed records &amp; audit trails of incidents &amp; complaints and consider this would provide the evidence.</p>	Yes	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint	Yes	

	<p>Extract from THT's Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure A complaint can be received verbally: by phone, by email, in writing, or orally.</p> <p><b>Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:</b> Written complaints should be sent to the Chief Officer, Taunton Heritage Trust, Huish Homes, Magdalene Street, Taunton TA1 1SG or by e-mail at <a href="mailto:chiefofficer@tauntonheritagetrust.org.uk">chiefofficer@tauntonheritagetrust.org.uk</a>.</p> <p>Verbal complaints may be made by phone to the Chief Officer 01823 335348.</p> <p>Verbal complaints from Residents or their relatives may be made to the Support Officer either in person or by phone 01823 335348 or mobile 07458021593 (office hours only.)</p> <p>If a complaint relates to the Chief Officer, a written complaint should be sent to the Chairman, Taunton Heritage Trust, Huish Homes, Magdalene Street, Taunton TA1 1SG</p>		
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? Once the revised Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure has been ratified for adoption at the Board meeting on 8 December it will be made available on the Trust's website.</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? Covered by Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? Via Residents Handbook, Letter of Appointment</p>	Yes	
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? Chief Officer is named contact for complaints. Depending on the source/nature of the complaint, CO would involve other officers and/or committees.</p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? CO consults with Staff and Trustees as appropriate</p>	No	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? CO has authority to engage with any party in order to resolve disputes</p>	Yes	
	<p>If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?</p>	No	
	<p>Is any third stage optional for residents?</p>	n/a	
	<p>Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? Records kept for 3 years</p>	Yes	
	<p>At what stage are most complaints resolved?  The majority of complaints are resolved before Stage 1.</p>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? Extract from Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure: At the completion of each stage the Trust will write to the complainant advising them of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The complaint stage</li> <li>- The outcome of the complaint</li> </ul>	Yes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The reasons for any decisions made</li> <li>The details of any remedy offered to put things right</li> <li>- Details of any outstanding actions</li> <li>- Details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied</li> </ul>		
	<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>Extract from Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure</p> <p>As part of the Complaint Policy the Complainant shall be given a fair opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set out their position</li> <li>- Comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.</li> </ul>	Yes	
	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? Don't receive enough complaints to measure this	n/a	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? Don't receive enough complaints to measure this	n/a	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one</li> <li>Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two</li> <li>Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>	100%	
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	n/a	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	n/a	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p>Don't receive enough complaints to measure this</p>	n/a	
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	n/a	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	n/a	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p>Yes if they request to do so.</p>		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	n/a	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	n/a	
	What was the reason for the refusal?	n/a	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	n/a	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p>Trust staff hold a reflect &amp; review session at the end of every incident/complaint to assess what could be done differently in future.</p>	yes	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		

	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?  <b>This has often resulted in the implementation of additional operational policies &amp; procedures and changes to working practices.</b></p>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? <b>Feedback to Residents by letter as appropriate</b></p> <p>b) the board/governing body? <b>CO reports quarterly to Board</b></p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? <b>Not currently</b></p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?  <b>It has prompted the review of our policy &amp; procedure</b></p>		
	<p>What changes have we made?  <b>Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure and Self- Assessment Form to be published on website. When the Residents Handbook is next revised we will include a copy of the Policy &amp; Procedure in full instead of referring to it</b></p>		