**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:**

**Self-Assessment Form V2**

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| **Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code**  **(References are made to YMCA Worcestershire’s Draft Complaints Policy)** | | | |  |
| **1** | **Definition of a complaint** | **Yes** | **No** | **Action** |
|  | Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?  *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*. | Yes the definition stated in the Code has been included in our Complaints Policy.  **Ref: 6.5** |  |  |
|  | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | Yes there is a section in our Complaints Policy that clearly states certain subject areas that would not be considered as a complaint. **Ref: 6.6** |  |  |
|  | Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?  Evidence relied upon | Yes we consider these exclusions to be reasonable and fair to residents. We will always look to explain the reasons why we do not consider the matter suitable for the complaints process. We will advise residents that they have the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Ombudsman. **Ref: 6.7**  Evidence of all instances where we have made exclusions will be recorded on the Complaints Register together with any documentation. |  | **Action COM1:**  The housing complaints register will record all stages, outcomes and correspondence. |
| **2** | **Accessibility** |  |  |  |
|  | Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? | Yes a full range of accessibility routes are available for residents to make a complaint including through social media and the company website.  **Ref: 6.10** |  | **Action COM2:**  Define the accessibility routes (existing and future) that will be available. Specify requirements for website developer to include online complaints form.. |
|  | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | Yes the Complaints Policy including the procedure is available on the company website  **Ref: 6.13** |  | **Action COM3:**  Publish the revised Complaints Policy and procedure on the company website. |
|  | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? | Yes reasonable adjustments are covered in section 5 of our Equality, Diversity and Involvement Policy and Procedure. |  |  |
|  | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? | Yes we include information about the complaints process in our resident handbook and on the company website. Residents will also be informed about the complaints process through their regular meetings with housing officers and periodically through the resident newsletter.**Ref: 6.13** |  | **Action COM4:**  The Resident Handbook will be updated with the revised Complaints Policy and Procedure. |
| **3** | **Complaints team and process** |  |  |  |
|  | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? | Yes we have appointed our Housing Operations Manager as the designated Complaint Officer who will take responsibility for complaint handling relating to housing matters. |  |  |
|  | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? | Yes the Complaint Officer will have the experience and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. |  |  |
|  | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? | Yes the Complaint Officer will have the authority backed by senior managers to compel engagement from all departments in the organisation. |  | **Action COM5:**  SMT to be requested to approve authority. |
|  | If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? |  | No there is not a third stage to the complaints procedure. If the resident is still not satisfied with the outcome, we will advise to contact the Housing Ombudsman. **Ref: Stage 2** |  |
|  | Is any third stage optional for residents? |  | No there is no optional third stage. |  |
|  | Does the final stage response set out residents’ right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? | Yes the Complaints Policy is specific about advising residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point they have exhausted the landlord’s complaints process but also throughout the life of a complaint. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman’s dispute support advisors. **Ref: 4.2** |  |  |
|  | Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? | Yes we will maintain a Complaints Register that references all complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident. |  | **See ACTION COM1** |
|  | At what stage are most complaints resolved? | Our performance measures will include the percentage of complaints resolved at each stage and the number of complaints dealt with on time. This will be formally monitored from the Complaints Register and reported to the Senior Management Team and to the Board of Trustees on a six-monthly basis.  We will aim to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity and to the satisfaction of our customers. **Ref: 6.9** |  | **ACTION COM6:**  Develop performance measures based on the indicators specified in the new Housing Complaints Policy section 7.  **ACTION COM7:**  Introduce the performance reporting mechanism to SMT and the Board of Trustees. |
| **4** | **Communication** |  |  |  |
|  | Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? | Yes residents are contacted to discuss their concerns and will be kept informed throughout the stages of complaints. This will include notification of the outcome of any investigation and proposed resolution. **Ref: 6.17** |  |  |
|  | Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? | Yes residents are informed of our position at each stage of the complaints’ process and are given the opportunity to request a review of the case if they believe that the investigation has failed to fully address their complaint.  **Ref: Complaint Stages** |  |  |
|  | Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? | Yes all complaints are acknowledged and logged within five days.  **Ref: Complaint Stages** |  |  |
|  | Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | Yes residents are advised on how to escalate their complaint at each stage.  **Ref: Complaint Stages** |  |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? | Our performance measures will include the percentage of complaints resolved at each stage. **Ref: 7.1** |  | **See Action COM6** |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? | Our performance measures will include the percentage of complaints resolved at each stage. **Ref: 7.1** |  | **See Action COM6** |
|  | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?   * Stage one   Stage one (with extension)   * Stage two   Stage two (with extension) | Our performance measures will include the percentage of complaint responses that have been sent within Code timescales. **Ref: 7.1** |  | **See Action COM6** |
|  | Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? | Yes every effort is made to comply with the timescales in the Policy and only in exceptional cases will these be extended to the limits defined in the Housing Ombudsman Code. |  |  |
|  | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? | Yes the resident would be informed and wherever possible the extension agreed beforehand. |  |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents’ satisfaction | Our performance measures include the proportion of complaints resolved to resdients’ satisfaction. **Ref:7.1** |  | **See Action COM6** |
| **5** | **Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service** |  |  |  |
|  | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? | Although we have no record of any requests for evidence from the Housing Ombudsman we would always endeavour to respond within the 15 day limit. |  |  |
|  | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | Although we have not requested an extension in providing evidence to the Ombudsman we will cooperate with the Ombudsman’s requests for evidence and provide this  within 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, we will provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay.  **Ref: 6.20** |  |  |
| **6** | **Fairness in complaint handling** |  |  |  |
|  | Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? | Yes we accept complaints from our customers or anyone who has a clear link to us, such as using a service we provide. Where a customer asks a third party to act on their behalf, we will ask for appropriate permissions from the customer before we will do this. **Ref: 6.8** |  |  |
|  | If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? | Yes we endeavour to listen to what has happened and to provide accurate advice that is easy to understand and gives a positive response to complaints. We promote open and transparent use of information at every stage of the complaints process.  **Ref: Purpose Statement** |  |  |
|  | How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal? | Our performance measures include the percentage of complaints we refused to escalate. We will also record the reason for the refusal. |  | **See Action COM6**  **Action COM7**  Record the complaints and reasons for non-escalation. |
|  | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | Yes where we have not escalated the complaint, we have provided the resident with a detailed explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. **Ref: 6.7** |  |  |
| **7** | **Outcomes and remedies** |  |  |  |
|  | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | Yes we will always make every effort to put mistakes right when things have gone wrong and ensure we learn from these situations to improve our services.  **Ref: Purpose Statement** |  |  |
| **8** | **Continuous learning and improvement** |  |  |  |
|  | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? | Where improvements have been made as a result of learning from complaints, these have been recorded by the housing officer dealing with the complaint. Going forward, we will record this information formally on the Complaints Register to be shared with residents, the Board and as part of the Annual Report. |  | **Action COM8:**  Compile a list of improvements made as a result of learning from previous complaints.  **Action COM9:**  Record all improvements made as a result of learning from future complaints on the Complaints Register. |
|  | How do we share these lessons with:   1. residents? 2. the board/governing body? 3. In the Annual Report? | Where we have made service changes as a result of investigating complaints, these are notified to residents through staff/resident meetings and the Resident Committees. | We will introduce the performance information on complaints handling and the lessons learned from complaints into the meeting cycle for SMT and the Board of Trustees on a six monthly basis, and include this information in the Annual Report. | **Action COM10:**  Introduce performance management reporting and lessons learned from complaints for SMT, the Board of Trustees and include this information in the Annual Report. |
|  | Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | Yes the Code has added more structure and definition to the Complaints Policy and Procedure. We will introduce a Complaints Register to record events and improvements that we have implemented. The performance measures will help to ensure that we are handling complaints effectively and that we are learning from our mistakes. |  |  |
|  | What changes have we made? | We have made significant revisions to the policy and procedures to comply with the Code and to improve complaint handling. We have compiled an Action Plan to meet these requirements and this will receive full support from SMT and our Board of Trustees. |  |  |