

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

| 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> | Yes | |
| | <p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p>Yes – in line with what the Housing Ombudsman cite as reasonable exclusions.</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> | Yes | |
| 2 | Accessibility | | |
| | <p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p>B3Living do not have a standalone reasonable adjustments policy as reasonable adjustments to access the complaints policy are incorporated into section 2.3 and 2.4 of the customer feedback policy and is also included but not restricted to section 5.2 and 5.4 of B3Living’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.</p> | | No |
| | <p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?</p> | Yes | |
| 3 | Complaints team and process | | |
| | <p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p>B3Living are service led when dealing with complaints with the Customer Insight Manager providing advice and support and overseeing complaint trends and reporting.</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?</p> | Yes | |
| | <p>Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?</p> | Yes | |

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| | If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making? | | N/A |
| | Is any third stage optional for residents? | | N/A |
| | 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 0 (informal). We do not deny the right to escalate. | | |
| 4 | Communication | | |
| | 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? | 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? The figures below are complaints recorded in 2019-20 If we look at complaints (all complaints s0, s1, s2) as 100%, then approximately 20% of complaints are formal complaints (stage 1 or stage 2). If we then take all formal complaints as 100% then approximately 90% of these are dealt with as s1 and 10% are dealt with as a s2. | | |
| | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? 10% | | |
| | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? B3Living's timescales within the complaint policy would have been considered satisfactory with the Housing Ombudsman's guidance. However, we have chosen to amend the timescales to adopt the Housing Ombudsman's timescales. The difference between B3Living's policy and the Housing Ombudsman's policy is that B3Living's response times were set against acknowledgement of a complaint, we have a service standard to acknowledge a stage one complaint in two working days and then respond after the acknowledgement is sent in 10 working days. The Housing Ombudsman timescales are set against receipt of a complaint. We have reviewed this and consider the change to be beneficial to our customers. | | |

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| | <p>We have also implemented extension timeframes as we believe this to be best practice and will improve the customer experience with the complaint’s procedure.</p> <p>The figures are complaints from 2019.20 where we did not have in place the Housing Ombudsman timeframes. The new code is now implemented, and we will see new figures from 2020-21.</p> <p>94.11% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within Code timescales (explained above)</p> <p>100% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within Code timescales</p> <p>Where the complaint is complex, or a key member of staff is not available, and the investigation requires their input we applied a reasonable extension with agreement with the customer. This happened in one formal case last year.</p> <p>We have made the following policy amends –</p> <p><i>Stage one decision – 10 working days from receipt of complaint</i> – B3Living are compliant on this; we state 10 working days from the date of receipt of the complaint. What we have amended to include in the policy is the extension timeframes. If we know it is not going to be possible to respond to a customer within this timeframe then we will give an explanation and a date by when the stage one response should be received. We have also amended the policy to include that the extension should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.</p> <p><i>Stage two response – 20 working days from request to escalate</i> – We have amended our policy to align with this. We have also amended the policy to include that if 20 days is not going to be possible that we will provide an explanation and a date as to when the stage two response will be received. We have also amended the policy to include that the extension should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.</p> | | |
| | Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? | Yes | |
| | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? | Yes | |
| | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents’ satisfaction | | |

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| | <p>Where we have surveyed residents in the past we have found that customers have been satisfied where a complaint has been found in their favour. Moving forward we will be surveying customers after complaints have been closed to be able to report more accurately on this.</p> | | |
| 5 | Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service | | |
| | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? | Yes | |
| | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | N/A | |
| 6 | Fairness in complaint handling | | |
| | Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? | Yes | |
| | If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? | Yes | |
| | How many cases did we refuse to escalate? None | | |
| | What was the reason for the refusal? N/A | | |
| | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | N/A | |
| 7 | Outcomes and remedies | | |
| | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | Yes | |
| 8 | Continuous learning and improvement | | |
| | <p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Our improvements can be found on our website: https://www.b3living.org.uk/tenants/our-service-standards-customer-voice/you-said-we-did/</p> <p>Improvements include but are not limited to: Review of our service charges process Overgrown estates Communication and improved contacts when dealing with the repairs and maintenance service The refund processes</p> | | |
| | <p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report? <p>Lessons are shared in the customer report and via quarterly customer reports to the Board. We also publish these on our website.</p> | | |

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| | Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | Yes | |
| | <p>What changes have we made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned to the full definition of the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint • Policy amend to include 10 working days <u>from receipt</u> of complaint. Extensions and advice on Stage 1 complaints • Policy changes to align to the code timescales around Stage 2 complaints. • Policy amend to include extensions to Stage 2 complaints • Process changes to create more robust audit trails around Stage 0 complaints. • Clarification around giving the customer the opportunity to put their case across prior to response, the need to keep records, guidance for what goes into a response, and the ability to contact the Ombudsman at any stage of a complaint. • Amended procedure document to reflect policy amends • Considerations of a complaints satisfaction survey | | |