

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Brunelcare's Self-assessment [December 2020]

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			What Does Our Current Policy say	Recommended action	
<b>1</b>	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>	Yes	No		
Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?  <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>			No	A complaint is defined as when a complainant communicates that they are unhappy about the work or standard of service provided by Brunelcare. This could be because:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We have failed to do something we said we would do, or acted too slowly.</li> <li>- The level of service provided did not meet an acceptable standard.</li> <li>- We have not followed a published policy or procedure.</li> <li>- There has been misconduct or inappropriate behaviour by an employee, volunteer or a contractor.</li> </ul>	<b>CHC 1:</b> To formally adopt the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?			No	<b>CHC 2:</b> To clearly set out any exclusions and the rationale for these.	
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?			N/A		
Evidence relied upon					
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	Yes	No		
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?		Yes		Complaints may be received in a variety of ways, from a customer, tenant, resident or a representative, including:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to Face.</li> <li>• By telephone.</li> <li>• By letter/email.</li> <li>• At a public meeting.</li> <li>• Through a satisfaction survey.</li> </ul>	<b>CHC 3:</b> To explore further routes by which a complaint can be made, including via social media.
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?		No		The Policy is not available on line but copies of the procedure for each service area can be found on line - see <a href="#">Brunelcare's Making a Complaint page</a>	<b>CHC 4: Immediate Action:</b> Copy of current Policy to be published on Brunelcare's website. ( <i>already actioned</i> )

			<a href="#">Care Home Complaints Procedure</a> <a href="#">Extra Care Housing Complaints Procedure</a> <a href="#">Domiciliary Care Complaints Procedure</a> <a href="#">Reablement Complaints Procedure</a> <a href="#">Sheltered Housing Complaints Procedure</a>	<b>CHC 5:</b> <u>By 31 January 2020:</u> To develop and publish a strengthened Complaints Policy and related Procedure, following a period of consultation with our tenants, clients and employees.
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	No		A formal Policy is not in place, but we always take steps to ensure that tenants and clients are provided with information and support in the form that meets their needs..	<b>CHC 6:</b> To develop and publish a 'Reasonable Adjustments Policy'.
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes		<p>The process for making a complaint is advertised on our website and on notice boards across all sites. Information on complaints is set out in Grapevine - the tenant newsletter and quarterly site meeting. Details of the complaints process are also set out in tenant sign up packs</p> <p>Staff will take all reasonable steps to address a concern and deal with it informally inline with our current policy. Where matters are unable to be addressed this way to the satisfaction of our tenants and clients, they are sign posted to our the relevant complaints procedure</p>	<b>CHC 7:</b> To explore with tenants, clients and relatives the best ways of providing advice.
<b>3 Complaints team and process</b>				
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	No		Currently complaints are managed by individual directorates/services.	<b>CHC 8:</b> To allocate responsibility for oversight of the complaints process to the Corporate Governance Team.  <b>CHC 9:</b> To allocate the role of 'Complaints Officer' to the Corporate Governance Officer and update their job description accordingly..  <b>CHC 10:</b> To set out the role of the 'Complaints Officer' in the revised Complaints Policy and related procedures. This will clearly set out the autonomy and authority of the role

Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	N/A			See CHC 8 to 10 above.
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	N/A			See CHC 8 to 10 above.
If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	No		There is a third stage to the complaints procedure but residents are not involved in this.	<b>CHC 11:</b> To develop a third stage of the process that involves tenants and/or clients in decision making.
Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes		The third stage set out in Brunelcare's Complaints Policy involves escalation to the Chief Executive.	See CHC 11 above
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes		<p>The policy states:</p> <p><i>After Brunelcare's internal complaint procedure has been exhausted all tenants can choose to take their complaint to be considered by an external organisation. This can be an MP, Local Councillor or a panel who can try and resolve the complaint in 2 ways.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They can try to resolve it themselves or</li> <li>- Refer it straight to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).</li> </ul> <p><i>Alternatively complainants can take the complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman service but this must be within <b>8 weeks</b> from the end of Brunelcare's complaints process, before the case can be considered by the Ombudsman.</i></p>	<b>CHC 12:</b> As part of CHC 5 - review the wording of the Policy regarding referral to the Housing Ombudsman Service to ensure that it is clear and in line with the wording promulgated by the Housing Ombudsman..
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		Correspondence is currently held at service and directorate level.	<b>CHC 13:</b> To implement a centralised complaints log and monitoring system; taking account of the GDPR.
At what stage are most complaints resolved?			All formal complaints received from tenants to date in 2020-21 have been resolved at the first stage of the complaints process.	
<b>4   Communication</b>				
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		The Complaints Policy sets out requirements in terms of contact and timescales.	
Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	No		This is not clearly articulated in the Policy, albeit the various stages of the complaints	This will be addressed as part of CHC 5.

			process enable tenants and clients to escalate their dissatisfaction.	
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes		Our policy requires that all complaints are acknowledged within three days.	
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes		Correspondence sent to clients and residents confirming the outcome of each stage sets out what they should do next if they are not satisfied with the response.	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			83% (5 out of 6) of complaints received from tenants to date in 2020-21 have been resolved at Stage 1. <i>[note; figures quoted in this and subsequent questions relate to housing tenant complaints only]</i>	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			17% (1 out of 6) were resolved at Stage 2	
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul>			All complaints were addressed in line with Code timescales.	
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			
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			100% to date in 2020-21	
<b>5 Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>				
Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	Yes		No requests for information have been received from the Ombudsman in 2020-21.  A case was referred to the Ombudsman in 2019-20 and all requests for information were dealt with in line with the Ombudsman's timescales.	
Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A			
<b>6 Fairness in complaint handling</b>				
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes			
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes		See Policy, Procedure and information provided as part of the signup process.	
How many cases did we refuse to escalate?			None	

What was the reason for the refusal?				
Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A			
<b>7 Outcomes and remedies</b>				
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes		The Board of Brunelcare encourages a culture of learning and sees complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.	As part of the development of a strengthened Complaints Policy and procedure (See CHC 5) greater emphasis will be placed on 'Putting Things Right'. This is very much the ethos of Brunelcare but is not strongly articulated in the current Policy
<b>8 Continuous learning and improvement</b>				
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			Learning from complaints has helped us to improve our communication with tenants, including how we communicate about the stages of the complaints process.	As part of the development of a strengthened Complaints Policy and procedure (See CHC 5) greater emphasis will be placed on learning. As stated above in relation to 'putting Things Right', learning is very much the ethos of Brunelcare but is not strongly articulated in the current Policy.
How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?			The number of complaints received and the outcomes are communicated to Tenants through the tenant newsletter Grapevine.  The performance, Quality and Experience Committee receives regular reports on complaints - this is a new process which is still being embedded.	
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes		The Code has had a positive impact on how we respond to complaints and the whole complaints process.  Brunelcare provides care services as well as housing and the code has been used to influence changes across all our services.	
What changes have we made?			As a result of self-assessing ourselves against the Code we are undertaking a fundamental review of our Complaints Policy and the way we manage, record, monitor and report complaints.	It was agreed that a strengthened Complaints Policy and related procedure would be developed.