

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>Yes Proposed policy has been amended to incorporate.</p>	
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p><i>Living will not consider any of the following as a complaint:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A request for a service (for example, reporting a repair)</i> • <i>A request for information, or an explanation of Living's policies</i> • <i>Something which happened, or which the customer knew of, more than six months before contacting Living</i> • <i>Any matter for which there is an alternative right of appeal or redress</i> • <i>An issue that is currently subject to legal proceedings</i> • <i>A complaint regarding a neighbour or anti-social behaviour</i> • <i>A complaint regarding financial advice</i> • <i>A complaint relating to Durham Key Options (Housing applications and lettings)</i> 	<p>Yes</p>	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p><i>Evidence relied upon – Complaints policy 2019/20 was consulted on with tenants. Further consultation on this specific question conducted September 2020 with tenants. Living has used guidance from HO policy on reasonable and fair exclusions.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In person</i> • <i>Via telephone (including text message)</i> • <i>In writing</i> • <i>Completing a customer satisfaction survey</i> • <i>Completing a customer feedback form</i> • <i>Email</i> • <i>Website (including live web chat)</i> 	<p>Yes</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Livin App (smartphones)</i> • <i>Social media</i> 		
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? https://www.livin.co.uk/customer-feedback-and-complaints/ https://www.livin.co.uk/media/1790/complaints-compliments-and-feedback-policy-december-2019.pdf</p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? <i>Livin's EDI policy sets out our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in employment and service delivery.</i></p> <p>https://www.livin.co.uk/media/1995/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-policy-2019-2022.pdf</p> <p><i>The policy outlines the principles, values, and commitments we are making at Livin to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded across the organisation.</i> <i>We aim to ensure that our services are accessible and flexible to the different needs of individuals and communities by using customer intelligence in a systematic way to delivers a brilliant customer experience that meets the personalised needs of our customers.</i> <i>We ensure the different needs of customers are built into the design of services via Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), transactional feedback resident involvement/customer voice opportunities and scrutiny reviews.</i> <i>This Policy is monitored via an Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring Report submitted to Livin's Housing and Assets Committee.</i> <i>An EIA of the policy sets out what reasonable adjustments Livin will make to ensure accessibility to all.</i></p>	Yes	
	<p>Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? <i>We advise at new tenant sign up, quarterly through rent statements and all tenants annually when rent increase letters are distributed by mail.</i> Information is available on Livin's website. Call Centre team give advice when it is clear at first point of contact that there is dissatisfaction with services. All staff receive training on complaints handling and are able to explain the process upon request.</p>	Yes	
3	Complaints team and process		
	<p>Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?</p> <p><i>There is a dedicated Customer Feedback Advisor supported by a Customer Voice Manager and Head of Community regeneration.</i> <i>Further to this there are trained complaints investigators throughout the organisation.</i></p>	Yes	
	<p>Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? <i>The Customer Feedback Advisor and Customer Voice Manager (in accordance with the Procedure) have autonomy to resolve complaints.</i> <i>Often this is done with service areas.</i></p>	Yes	

	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? <i>Livin does not have a third formal stage to the complaints procedure in line with best practice and Housing Ombudsman guidance.</i>		X – No third formal stage
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		No – designated person or HOS
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? <i>Livin has a standard template for all complaints closing letters. The Customer Feedback Team complete a quality check of all complaints closing letters to ensure that the information is included as standard. Livin's Feedback Guide and Policy also includes this advice.</i> https://www.livin.co.uk/customer-feedback-and-complaints/ https://www.livin.co.uk/media/1790/complaints-compliments-and-feedback-policy-december-2019.pdf	Yes	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? <i>Livin's Customer Feedback Team hold detailed records of all incoming and outgoing contact with the complainant in a central document management file.</i>	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? Evidence – Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2019/20	95.2% Informal/ 4.8% stage 1 (2019/20)	
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? <i>Livin's complaint procedure requires the investigator to contact the complainant to give updates, even where there are none, to build trust with the complainant and provide assurance that the matter is being dealt with.</i>	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? <i>At closure of a stage 1 complaint the complainant is advised in writing of their right to request a Stage 2 appeal. This is included in the standard closing letter template and is quality checked by the Customer Feedback Team for consistency and equality of complaints handling.</i>	Yes (Stage 2 appeal)	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? <i>Livin aims to acknowledge and log all complaints within two working days.</i>	Yes	

	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? <i>Livin has a standard template for all complaints closing letters. The Customer Feedback Team complete a quality check of all complaints closing letters to ensure that the information is included as standard.</i></p> <p><i>Livin's Feedback Guide and Policy includes this advice.</i></p> <p>https://www.livin.co.uk/customer-feedback-and-complaints/</p> <p>https://www.livin.co.uk/media/1790/complaints-compliments-and-feedback-policy-december-2019.pdf</p>	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	100% Upheld	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	No stage 2 complaints	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one • Stage one (with extension)* • Stage two • Stage two (with extension) <p><i>All extensions are agreed with the complainant and examples are where the complaint is particularly complex or due to COVID restrictions.</i></p>	<p>0%</p> <p>100%</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p><i>All extensions are agreed with the complainant and in the main are due to a complaint being particularly complex and require a large amount of information from different sources. The Customer Feedback monitors response times and sends timely reminders to investigators as standard.</i></p>	Yes	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p><i>Livin advises the complainant in writing of any delays to the complaint investigation and gives a date of when they can expect the complaint to be concluded and closed.</i></p>	Yes	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction?</p> <p><i>100% of Formal Stage 1 complaints / 96.9% informal complaints.</i></p>	99.28%	
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p><i>Livin has not received any requests from the Ombudsman in the last three years.</i></p>	N/A	
	<p>Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?</p> <p><i>As above.</i></p>	N/A	

6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p><i>Options include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative or friend • Support worker • County Councillor • Member of Parliament • Nominated advocate 	Yes	
	<p>If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?</p>	Yes	
	<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate?</p> <p>What was the reason for the refusal?</p> <p><i>The complaint had been upheld and compensation offered. The complainant did not provide any evidence that policy had not been followed, that all elements of the complaint has not been investigated or any new evidence that warranted further investigation. Livin offered to open a new complaint if required but this was not taken up by the complainant.</i></p>	One	Upheld at Stage 1 and compensation offered.
	<p>Did we explain our decision to the resident?</p> <p><i>The reason for not escalating the complaint was given to the complainant in writing and explained the next steps for redress eg Designated Person or Housing Ombudsman. They were also advised that they could contact the Ombudsman for advice before deciding about their next steps.</i></p>	Yes	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?</p> <p><i>Service improvements as a result of complaints are recorded and monitored by the Customer Feedback Team. Monthly reports are sent to Heads of Service and service managers to ensure that these are actioned in a timely manner.</i></p>	Yes	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p><i>The majority of service improvements are implemented at an operational level by the responsible service manager. These include refinements to processes/procedures, mentoring/coaching of employees and improved intelligence gathering to tailor services more effectively. For example, in the last 12 months there have been significant changes to the roof and chimney repair processes which has reduced the timescales for job completion from 40 working days to 25.</i></p>	113 in 2019/20	
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) Residents; website and Annual Report to tenants</p> <p>https://www.livin.co.uk/about-us/</p>	Yes	

	<p>b) <i>the board/governing body? Housing & Assets Committee 13 July 2020 and quarterly performance updates to Board.</i></p> <p>c) <i>In the Annual Report? Annual Report to Tenants and Customer Feedback Annual Report</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? <i>See details below.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Updated definition of a complaint in Policy,</i> • <i>Created an internal digital resource for Livin employees to give guidance on complaints handling (Sharepoint)</i> • <i>increased information to customers on how to access complaints (rent increase letters, sign up and quarterly rent statements)</i> • <i>Updated guide of giving feedback to advise that complainant can contact Ombudsman at any time throughout their complaint for guidance</i> • <i>System agreed for picking up social media complaints</i> • <i>Sharing lessons learnt on the website</i> 		