

Southdown Complaints Handling Self-Assessment against Housing Ombudsman's Code: December 2020

1	Definition of a complaint	Yes/No	Further information
1a	<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	Now included in Policy Document wording
1b	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	<p>Specific exclusions now introduced and included in Policy Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where the issue being complained about happened more than 6 months ago (unless the complaint is about a recurring issue and some instances occurred more recently than 6 months ago)</i> • <i>Where the client has already begun to address the issues being complained of via a legal process. In these cases the issue will be dealt with as part of the legal process.</i> • <i>Where the issue being complained about has already been dealt with via our Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure.</i> • <i>Where the complaint is the first report of anti-social behaviour as it relates to a Southdown property or tenant. (Complaints which relate to Southdown's handling of previous reports of anti-social behaviour are deemed to be within scope of the complaints process, subject to the above exclusions).</i>
1c	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	Yes	Yes, although we will keep this under review and seek to consult tenants and clients on this over 2021.

1d	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	Yes, we include within our tenants handbook, website, Annual Report to Tenants and to clients through information provided about the specific support services they receive – we seek to evidence accessibility of complaints process through annual client & tenant survey feedback.
2	Accessibility	Yes/No	Further information
2a	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	Evidenced within our annual review of complaints. Made more explicit within Complaints Policy.
2b	Evidence relied upon	Yes, available	Diversity of routes previous complaints have come forward (letter, email, Facebook, <i>feedback</i> webform etc)
2c	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	Now included within Feedback and transparency sections of the website
2d	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy in relation to complaints?	Yes	Included as a separate section within the complaints P&P and hosted on the website
3	Complaints team and process	Yes/No	Further information
3a	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	No	We have a central complaints coordinator role but, due to the diversity of the business, we intend to keep the investigation and response to complaints within the individual divisions.
3b	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	No	As above although they will chase for the resolution of the complaint
3c	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes	Complaints Coordinator reports to Quality and Performance Manager (who reports to DCEO), all open complaints and their progress reported to the Executive Team on a fortnightly basis.
3d	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	No	Southdown have reviewed effectiveness of third stage and agreed on the removal of stage three of the procedure
3e	Is any third stage optional for residents?	No	Proposal to reduce procedure down to two stages gained Board agreement in October 2020
3f	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	No	This has been added back into the Complaints Procedure as an option for tenants and those raising complaints about Southdown's Housing operations.
3g	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes	Held with Complaints Coordinator
3h	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	n/a	2019/20: Stage One (22), Stage 2 (2), Stage 3 (0)
4	Communication	Yes/No	Further information
4a	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes	Yes, complaints records will show this. Acknowledgement letter sent within 3 days and response

			within 10. Within the new procedure, tenants will be telephoned before acknowledgement and response letters are sent.
4b	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	Usually there will be discussion prior to Southdown's formal complaints response- Southdown are revising the procedure to formalise this.
4c	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes	Complaints responded to within 5 days
4d	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes	Further escalation is included as a standard section on complaints response template letters – we have updated these to indicate that the Housing Ombudsman is also accessible to Southdown Tenants or those in receipt of Southdown's Housing or related services
4e	What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage One?	92%	
4f	What proportion of complaints are resolved at Stage Two?	8%	
4g	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage two Stage two (with extension)	78% 100% 100% n/a	
4h	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes	Due to complexity of investigation and absence of key staff to provide evidence in support of satisfactory investigation.
4i	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	Yes
4k	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	Not known	Revised procedure will include a satisfaction survey phone call to the tenant/client about the handling of the complaint and their satisfaction with the outcome. This will be trialed in 2021.
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes/No	Further information

5a	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	n/a	No complaints in 19/20 that reached the Ombudsman
5b	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	n/a	No complaints in 19/20 that reached the Ombudsman
6	Fairness in complaint handling	Yes/No	Further information
6a	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	This forms part of our policy and guidance for clients
6b	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes	
6c	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	None	
6d	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes	n/a – Where this has occurs in future this is included as a standard component of complaint response letters in use.
7	Outcomes and remedies	Yes/No	Further information
7a	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	This information is collected – we will consolidate this information and learning log in our annual review of complaints.
8	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes/No	Further information
8a	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	-	This information is collected – we will consolidate this information and learning log in our annual review of complaints.
8b	How do we share these lessons with: a). residents? b). the board/governing body? c). In the Annual Report?	-	This forms part of the annual Feedback Report and lessons specific to tenants and housing are included as a section within our Annual Report to Tenants. The Board see an annual overview of complaint received and lessons learned and we will be seeking to adapt the format of this report
8c	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes	Yes- Details of changes included within this self-assessment.
8d	What changes have we made?	-	Southdown have:

			<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reviewed and revised the Complaints policy and procedure. Southdown has now included recommended standardised wording and exclusion criteria and included reference to the Housing Ombudsman for those raising complaints Southdown's Housing services.2. Reviewed and removed Stage Three of the Complaints Procedure3. Developed the 'Openness and Transparency' section of the website to host the revised Complaints Policy, this Complaints Self-Assessment as well as future reviews of complaints. <p>Southdown will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Adapt its Annual Review of Complaints and lessons log to allow for hosting upon the website.2. Work with its tenants and clients to review its complaints processes and access to raise complaints.
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