

Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code: Bolton at Home self-assessment - December 2021

Complaint code item	Bolton at Home policy / information	Further action to ensure compliance	
1. Definition of a complaint			
1.1.	<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>Our Group Customer Feedback (Complaint) Policy states - Bolton at Home's complaint process</p> <p>A complaint is defined as <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>Group Customer Feedback (Complaint) Policy was approved by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bolton at Home Operations Committee Oct-2020 - Arcon Board Nov-2020
1.2	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	The Group Customer Feedback (Complaint) Policy states that there may be occasions, when BH is not able to accept a complaint.	None required
1.3	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	<p>Our policy details these circumstances as follows:</p> <p>We are unable to accept your complaint if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It relates to a first-time request for a service. • Legal proceedings are pending or have started, or where there is a legal solution. • It relates to an issue that has occurred due to an Act of God e.g., high winds; • It is a disagreement with our policies or procedures. • It relates to reports about neighbour nuisance and / or antisocial behaviour (this will be dealt with under our Antisocial Behaviour Policy); • It is considered the demands are unreasonable / aggressive or unreasonably persistent. <p>If we decide not to accept a complaint, we will always provide a detailed explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.</p>	None required
2 Accessibility			
2.1	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	<p>Residents can complain by a variety of methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By calling us on 01204 328000 • By emailing us at Customer.care@boltonathome.org.uk • By completing a customer feedback form https://www.boltonathome.org.uk/customer-feedback • By writing to us at Bolton at Home, 98 Waters Meeting Road, Bolton, BL1 8SW. • Via Facebook page or Twitter account, or web-chat • We would also accept a complaint face to face from a customer and log that with the complaints team to be actioned accordingly 	None required
2.2	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Available on the Bolton at Home website https://www.boltonathome.org.uk/customer-feedback	Group Customer Feedback (Complaint) Policy available on BH and Arcon website following approval in Nov-2020
2.3	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	The Customer Feedback (Complaint) Policy has an up to date Equality Analysis.	None required
2.4	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	The process is detailed on the Bolton at Home internet www.boltonathome.org.uk/customer-feedback and the Customer Voices Channel meet on a quarterly basis.	None required
3 Complaints team and process			
3.1	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Bolton at Home have a designated Customer Care Team – Customer Experience Co-ordinators.	None required
3.2	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes - for low level complaints which can include requests for gestures of goodwill or compensation.	None required
3.3	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Yes - for low level complaints and to ensure that complaint service levels agreements remain within the timescales as set out by the code.	None required
3.4	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	We don't have a third stage there is a final stage which is optional for residents as below.	None required
3.5	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes – as below this is the Housing Ombudsman stage.	None required

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3.6	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes - the Housing Ombudsman contact information is detailed in the final stage section of the policy.	None required
3.7	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes - the Customer Experience Co-ordinators maintain a detailed case note file for every complaint.	None required
3.8	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	The majority of complaints received are resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints process.	None required
4 Communication			
4.1	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	The Customer Experience Co-ordinators maintain contact with customers throughout the process by sending out acknowledgement, investigation and if required progress up-date letters.	None required
4.2	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 - through the Stage 1 and Stage 2 process. Customers can also engage with a designated person to refer their complaint.	None required
4.3	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes - the Customer Experience Co-ordinators have a process in place to ensure that complaints are acknowledged and logged within five days.	None required
4.4	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes - this information is detailed in the policy under Section 4 "What Happens Next", item 4.4 stage 1, stage 1 and "if you still remain dissatisfied".	None required
4.5	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	For the year 20/21 88%	None required
4.6	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	For the year 20/21 11%	None required
4.7	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one • Stage one (with extension) • Stage two • Stage two (with extension) 	Stage 1 – 21% Stage 1 (with extension) – 71% Stage 2 – 40% Stage 2 (with extension) – 50%	This information was taken from Q3 Oct 21- Dec21. It will be updated at the end of the financial year.
4.8	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes - an example of "good reason" would be COVID, waiting for an Asbestos survey following an inspection.	None required
4.9	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes - the Customer Experience Co-ordinators would provide the customer with a progress update letter which would detail the reason for the extension.	None required
4.10	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	48.1% very / fairly satisfied	None required
5 Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service			
5.1	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	No - for our more complex complaints or issues with retrieving archive information during COVID we would request an extension to the timeframe requested by the Housing Ombudsman.	None required
5.2	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	Yes - by telephone call and email.	None required
6 Fairness in complaint handling			
6.1	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes - Section 3, "How to contact us" we advise customers that they can ask someone to act on their behalf or if they require support to make their complaint, they can contact Bolton at Home for assistance.	None required
6.2	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	The Customer Experience Co-ordinators detail all communication in clear language without the use of jargon, if requested they can also provide information in other formats.	None required
6.3	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	We refused to escalate 3 complaints at stage 2. Reasons for refusal include if the outcome of the complaint would remain the same.	

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6.4	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	Yes - the Customer Experience Co-ordinators would detail Bolton at Home's decision in writing	None required
7 Outcomes and remedies			
7.1	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes - we have implemented mandatory senior manager learning please refer to the Annual Report	None required
8 Continuous learning and improvement			
8.1	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	We have adopted best practice and we are using the Housing Ombudsman template complaint letters. Implemented mandatory complaint training for senior managers. Amended policies following customer feedback e.g. Repairs Policy - we now changing customers light bulbs. Anti - Social Behaviour policy - improved communication.	None required
8.2	How do we share these lessons: a) With residents? b) With the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?	a) Residents - Operations Committee and Customer Voices Channel on a quarterly basis b) The board/governing body - Annual Complaints Report to board c) In the Annual Report - Dedicated section in the Annual Report for Complaints	None required
8.3	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes - we have adopted the Housing Ombudsman complaint template letter for complaints, which has a clear structure to the format and make it easier for customers to understand.	None required
8.4	What changes have we made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint letter templates Mandatory complaints training for senior managers Review of customer satisfaction survey Revision of the Customer Feedback (complaints) Policy with an additional section for "exclusions" Amendment of timeframes for stage 1 and stage 2 Addition of the definition of a complaint Introduction of a new complaint case management system in October 2021. Additional recruitment into the customer care team to provide admin support. 	None required