

Housing Ombudsman - Complaints Self-Assessment

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 Author: Sharon Graham – Customer Experience Manager
 Contact: sgraham@calico.org.uk

Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaint Handling Code in July 2020, setting out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The Code is part of the Ombudsman’s new powers in the revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme. Landlords are expected to carry out regular self-assessment against the code to ensure their complaint handling is in line with the code. This forms the completed self-assessment for Calico Homes and relates to the period July to November 2020.

Complaint Handling Code Requirement:	Meet Yes or No		The commentary below explains how Calico Homes meets the Code.
<u>Definition of a complaint</u> Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?	Yes		
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.			The Ombudsman's definition of a complaint is included on the Calico Homes website and in the internal Feedback is Gold – (FIG) complaint handling procedure. The internal procedure outlines how we log and act upon customer Dissatisfaction, Dissatisfaction Escalations and Complaints that require a case to be opened. Staff log all customer feedback positive or negative on the CRM / FIG system, which was launched in July 2020.
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes		The Calico Group Complaints Policy excludes complaints from customers about other customers, those complaints are resolved in accordance with the Calico Homes Anti-Social Behavior (ASB) Policy and Procedure.
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?			Yes, if customer has a complaint about the way an ASB case has been handled, then a complaint case will be raised.
Evidence relied upon			The Calico Homes Feedback is Gold Complaints Procedure.

Accessibility

Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes	Complaints can be made by customers in whichever way they choose to do so; face to face, over the telephone, by email, letter or via a social media channel.
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	Our customer complaints procedure is available online at www.calicohomes.org.uk . This explains the 2-stage process, and service standard timeframes that customers can expect to receive when they report a problem. Calico Homes is part of the wider Calico group. The Calico Group Complaints Policy applies to all companies in the group. The relevant policy statements and procedures that that apply to Calico Homes customers, and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, are included on our website. A PDF style leaflet is in production and this will be available on our website in January 2021.
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	Partly	The Calico Group Complaints Policy includes statements on Accessibility and Making a Complaint.
Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes	We advise customers about our complaints process when they contact us, and the information on how to report a complaint is available on www.calicohomes.org.uk . We are looking at other ways to raise awareness of the complaints process with our customers.

Complaints team and process

Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes	Sharon Graham - Customer Experience Manager is the author of and oversees the Group Complaints Policy, the Calico Homes complaints procedure and the Feedback is Gold system.
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Yes	Yes, and complaint resolution is also the responsibility of each Service Coordinator and Manager for each respective service area. Senior Managers deal with appeals.
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other	Yes	

departments to resolve disputes?			
If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure, are residents involved in the decision making?		No	The Housing Ombudsman does not recommend a 3-stage process. Calico Homes use the recommended 2-stage process.
Is any third stage optional for residents?		No	The Housing Ombudsman does not recommend a 3-stage process. Calico Homes use the recommended 2-stage process.
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes		This detail is included in both the Stage-1 Complaint Resolution letter, and the Stage-2 Appeal Outcome letter.
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		The newly introduced Feedback is Gold Case Processing system contains folders to record for each case, the customers feedback, the acknowledgement, all the correspondence to and from the customer, any evidence sought as part of the investigation and the complaint outcome.
At what stage are most complaints resolved?			Stage 1

Communication

Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		When a customer reports a problem the staff member will explain, who the complaint has been passed onto for resolution and what will happen next. An acknowledgement within 2 working days and a full response within 10 working days from the date the complaint was reported. Keeping customers informed is part of our 10-step process which is built into our Feedback is Gold procedure.
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		Yes, The Coordinator or Manager handling the complaint will discuss all points of the customers complaint, discuss options, and agree a resolution.
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes		Within 2 working days.
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes		This detail is covered in the complaint resolution and appeal outcome letter and the same is explained at each stage on our website.

What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?		During November 2020 - A total of 18 customer complaints were closed, 15 complaints (83%) were resolved within 10 working days. Against a company target of 90%.
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?		During November 2020 - there was 1 stage 2 complaint.
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?		During November 2020, 83% of complaints were sent within code timescales.
• Stage one		During November 2020, 15 complaint cases closed at Stage 1.
Stage one (with extension)		3 complaint cases closed with extension period.
• Stage two		1 Appeal case was closed within the 20-day timeframe.
Stage two (with extension)		None
Where timescales have been extended, did we have good reason?	Yes	If the complaint is complex and more time is required to ensure a positive outcome for the customer. Then the reasons to extend will be discussed and agreed with the customer. The new timeframe must not exceed a further 10 working days.
Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the resident informed?	Yes	The Complaint Case Processing system highlights reminders to staff before they come overdue to help keep the customer informed. The true answer to this question would be gathered at the end of a closed complaint when the customer is invited to complete a customer satisfaction survey.
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction		Complaints Survey satisfaction data reported for the period July to October 2020, says: 52.9% of customers said they were satisfied in how their complaint was handled. 70% said it was easy to report their problem to Calico. 66% said they were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint overall.

Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service

Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	N/A	No requests for evidence have been received from the Ombudsman during this assessment period.
Where the timescale was extended did, we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	No requests for evidence have been received from the Ombudsman during this assessment period.

Fairness in complaint handling

Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes		Yes, for example a local Councillor, MP or another designated person.
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes		We are not aware of any advice being given to customers, that was not accurate or easy to understand.
How many cases did we refuse to escalate?			No cases were refused to be escalated for the period assessed - July to November 2020.
What was the reason for the refusal?			N/A
Did we explain our decision to the resident?			N/A

Outcomes and remedies

Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes		The root causes and learning actions are logged at the case completion stage. We are developing better ways to report on this, so we can review over time whether the changes we are making are providing positive outcomes for our customers.
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Continuous learning and improvement

What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?	Yes		<p>1) We have made it easier for customers to report problems and for staff to log them. A new Complaints handling system was launched in July 2020 this has enabled staff to log all customer feedback from customers in one, rather than two separate ICT systems.</p> <p>2) Several customers have told us that they were unhappy about the length of time it has taken for us to fix some long-standing guttering repairs. A planned program of guttering repairs is now due to start early December 2020 and will carry on until the end of March 2021, affecting over 400 households.</p> <p>3) Some customers have told us that they were unhappy with the B with Us Housing application process. We have built customer feedback from recent complaints into a full review of our Lettings process. Looking ahead we will ensure that customer expectations are better managed by providing improved information early in the housing application process.</p>
How do we share these lessons, with:			

a) residents?	Partly	This information will be shared on with our Neighbourhood Reps (Residents' group) and on our website.
b) the board/governing body?	Yes	Through quarterly performance reporting to Board and through the 'What our Customers are Saying report'
c) In the Annual Report?	Partly	Calico will consult with customers to produce next year's annual report and ensure that accessible and useful information is included that benefits them in respect of complaint handling and complaint learning.
Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes	Yes, it has provided greater clarity and enabled us to focus on the changes required internally to ensure that we comply with the code in all areas of our complaint handling processes and ICT system. This in turn has made it easier for staff to respond to customer complaints.
What changes have we made?	Yes	We have made changes to our Feedback is Gold (complaints) procedure, staff training, the ICT system and to the information held on our website. We will continue to embed the new complaints handling system and develop our reporting to improve on the way we capture and share the lessons learnt.

The next self-assessment will be carried out in June 2021.

If you have any questions regarding the Calico Homes Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment, then please contact:

Sharon Graham
 Customer Experience Manager
 Calico Homes
 E: sgraham@calico.org.uk
 T: 01282 686300