



**Scrutiny Report on
Norton Housing and Support Ltd's
'Annual Complaints Performance and
Service Improvement Report'**

Introduction:

This scrutiny report aims to assess the compliance of Norton Housing and Support Ltd with the Complaints Handling Code set by the Social Housing Ombudsman. The Complaints Handling Code serves as a crucial framework to ensure that as a social housing provider we effectively handle and resolve complaints from our tenants in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. The report examines the extent to which we adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Code and identifies areas of improvement for enhancing complaint resolution processes and adopting a Positive Complaints Handling Culture.

Methodology:

The report takes in to account a review of the Annual Complaint's Performance and Service Improvement Report, alongside the Assessment Form provided by the Housing Ombudsman which was completed by Norton Housing and Support Complaints Handling Officer and CEO through a combination of document reviews, conversations with key staff, and analysis of complaint handling procedures and outcomes. The focus was on evaluating compliance with key aspects of the Complaints Handling Code, including accessibility of complaints procedures, timeliness of responses, transparency in communication, and fairness in decision-making, all of which are highlighted under the nine sections of the assessment form.

KEY FINDINGS:	
Section 1. Definition of a complaint	Clarity of the definitions of 'complaint' and 'service request', these need to be better defined and shared more effectively for our tenants to have a clearer understanding.
Section 2. Exclusions	NH&S demonstrate a commitment to responding to complaints promptly and have no exclusions in place for the timeframe in which tenants must make a complaint, this is a considered approach due to the clientele NH&S work with and number of units the organisation manages.
Section 3. Accessibility and Awareness	There are some limitations in the accessibility of the procedures that have been identified, therefore there is a need to improve the visibility and ease of access to complaint channels for tenants.
	NH&S communicates with tenants in a clear and transparent manner throughout the complaints handling process. Nonetheless, it has been recognised that an improvement is needed in providing information to all tenants on the outcomes of complaints and the learning that has been taken from these to improve the service going forward.
Section 4. Complaints Handling Staff	A recent review of job functions has incorporated the role of Complaints Handling Officer within the HR & Business Services Lead post. This is a significant and important role within the organisation and recognises the importance of instilling a positive Complaints Handling Process and Culture within the business.
Section 5. Complaint Handling Process	One single Complaint Handling Policy is in operation across all NH&S services which provides clarity and contains the recommended two stage complaint handling procedure.
	All letters/email templates are clear and where required adjustments can be made to ensure tenants have access to the information on the Complaint Handling process in a manner that suits them best, taking into account the NH&S service user needs in respect of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.
	NH&S Licence/Tenancy Agreements are considered to be a suitable and effective response to management of behaviours which is backed by the organisations Breach of Licence and Anti-Social Behaviour Policies.

Section 6. Complaints Stage	On review of complaint logs and associated paperwork it is clear that all complaints are dealt with and administered within the recommended timescales, all of which is clearly outlined within the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure document.
	Communication Logs for complaints were reviewed to be clear and succinct and letters to tenants outline all the information as outlined by the code of practice.
	NH&S have not received complaints within this reporting period that have escalated to Stage 2, however all templates and information is available should the event ever arise.
Section 7. Putting things right	NH&S take complaints very seriously and ensure lessons are learnt and complaints remedied. However, it has been identified that logging the remedies and completed actions requires some adjustment in order for this to be a comprehensive record going forward.
Section 8. Self-assessment, reporting and compliance	A clear report is prepared annually and published as per the guidance.
Section 9. Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement	With a new CEO in post there has been a refocus in this area of work and an adoption of a clear stance in developing a positive complaint handling culture. It is evident that communications and staff training needs attention to support this.
	Key personnel have been identified and are being supported to undertake their roles within the Complaint Handling Process. Training for staff members involved in complaint resolution is deemed essential to ensure consistent and fair decision-making processes which is being put in place.
	The Trustee Board are in receipt of quarterly updates on complaints. It has been identified that these reports although comprehensive require benchmarking against other similar sized organisations to support the annual review and organisational development.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the scrutiny report, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance compliance with the Complaints Handling Code:

1. Improve the visibility and accessibility of complaints procedures for tenants through clear communication and easy-to-access channels, utilising the new CRM system to provide better information on tenant communication preferences.
2. Implement training programs for staff members involved in complaint handling to ensure consistent and supported approach to complaint handling that enables an accessible procedure and fair decision-making processes.
3. Enhance transparency and encourage a Positive Complaints Handling Culture by producing an easily digestible summary of the complaints, the remedies and the reasons behind decisions in a manner that best suits the tenants of NH&S.
4. Conduct regular reviews and audits of complaint handling processes to identify areas for improvement and ensure ongoing compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.
5. Conduct regular reviews of complaints benchmarked against suitably identified and comparable service providers to help in identifying areas for improvement and ensure ongoing compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, as a small local Social Housing Provider NH&S demonstrates an excellent commitment to complying with the Complaints Handling Code. As identified, there are areas where improvements can be made to; enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of complaints handling processes and nurture a more positive complaints handling culture. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report and that are backed through the Self-Assessment Form, it is expected that NH&S can better meet the expectations outlined in the Code and ultimately improve tenant satisfaction and trust in our complaints handling system.

This report is ratified by the Trustee Board on 23rd June 2024.

By: Wieslaw Holynski

Signed 

Position: Chair of Trustees