

Our approach to complaints

At Pioneer, we strive to provide a great service, but we recognise that sometimes things go wrong. We understand the importance of making it as easy as possible for our customers to tell us when something isn't right so we can work together to find a solution.

We are committed to the highest of standards in complaints management, subscribing to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), and are committed to exceeding the requirements of the HOS Complaints Handling Code.

We welcome the code and we are adapting our approach to ensure we meet the requirements. We launched our new complaints policy in December 2020 and will carry out more work to ensure we continually improve our approach.

Our assessment in December is set out below. We will review this assessment annually, but in the first year we will review this more frequently, listening to our customers to inform the further changes we need to make.

Our assessment against the Complaints Code Checklist

Does the complaints code use the following definition of a complaint? 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.	Yes
Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes
Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? We have kept exclusions to a minimum, with a focus on resolving expressions of dissatisfaction, agreeing the policy with our resident led board. We will also assess feedback from customers to feed into future reviews of our policy.	Yes
Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes
Is the complaints policy and procedure available online <i>We have produced a summary on our website with a link to the full policy so that it can be downloaded.</i>	Yes
Do we have a reasonable adjustment policy?	Yes

<i>This is built into the policy and we intend to develop a wider communications and reasonable adjustments document as part of our equality and diversity work.</i>	
Do we regularly advise residents about the complaints process? <i>Although our complaints process is visible on our website and we make reference to it in our newsletters we recognise the need for some further work in this area to make it more routine. We will achieve this in our early 2021 newsletter.</i>	More work to do
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <i>Our Customer 1st Team leader and the Customer 1st team take the lead on complaints management.</i>	Yes
Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	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>The third stage (which is optional) is a resident led panel.</i>	Yes
Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes
Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes
Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes
At what stage are most complaints resolved? <i>Most of our complaints are solved at the first stage of our complaints process</i>	Stage 1
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? <i>We have built this into our new policy, ensuring extensions to timescales only happen in collaboration with residents</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>Where we require further information we discuss this with the resident to help inform our investigation and the outcome. We then invite customers to discuss our decision as part of the escalation process.</i>	Yes
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? <i>We aim to acknowledge complaints within 24 hours, but it is in our policy to always acknowledge within 5 days. We have acknowledged 100% of complaints within this timescale (April to December 2020)</i>	Yes
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes

<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p><i>(figures relate to complaints from April to November 2020)</i></p>	100%
<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p><i>No complaints escalated to stage 2 (April to November 2020)</i></p>	
<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <p>Stage one – 84% (April to November 2020) Stage one (with extension) - 5% Stage two – <i>no cases have escalated to stage 2</i> Stage two (with extension) – <i>no cases have escalated to stage 2</i></p>	See text
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p> <p><i>We did not previously monitor this, We have now started so will be able to provide this information going forward.</i></p>	More work to do
<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p> <p><i>We did not previously monitor this, We have now started so will be able to provide this information going forward.</i></p>	More work to do
<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p><i>We introduced a new satisfaction survey on complaints in December 2020 which will allow us to provide this information for future quarters.</i></p>	TBC
<p>Cooperation with the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) service – Were all requests responded to within 15 days?</p> <p>Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?</p> <p><i>We have received no requests from the HOS this year to date.</i></p>	N/A
<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p>	Yes
<p>If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?</p> <p><i>We have not previously proactively monitored this, however the satisfaction survey introduced from December 2020 allows us to collate this information, enabling us to report in future assessments.</i></p>	More work to do
<p>How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal? Did we explain our decision to the customer.</p> <p><i>We have not refused to escalate any complaints this year.</i></p>	None
<p>Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put this right?</p> <p><i>In all complaints where we have identified that something has gone wrong we offer a remedy. There is more work to do in this area so we can evidence this, documenting our learning to inform future service delivery and policy development. This evidence gathering</i></p>	More work to do

<i>commenced in December 2020, enabling us to report in future assessments.</i>	
<p>What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?</p> <p><i>We share learning points from complaints with the service area concerned. However we have now put in place a more formal learning mechanism to identify and share the learning with staff, senior members of staff and board. This will inform future analysis.</i></p>	See notes
<p>How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report?</p> <p><i>We intend to make complaints learning a regular feature in our newsletters to our residents so that we can be confident that all residents have visibility of this. This will also be replicated on our annual reports.</i></p> <p><i>We have also committed to provide updates to our board members at each board meeting, sharing the learning from our complaints and inviting discussion and comment to ensure they have full visibility.</i></p>	In progress

Has the code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? What changes have we made.

We have welcomed the introduction of the code which provides real clarity, prompting us to take a critical look at how we manage complaints. We welcome the standard, industry-wide definition of a complaint.

We have rewritten our complaints policy and introduced some new performance measures, in collaboration with residents, staff and board members. This has provided greater clarity and empowerment for staff to resolve complaints. Although the number of complaints we receive is relatively small, as a small community based housing provider we are responsive to our customers and value the feedback we receive from them.

The code has enabled us to refocus our activity and introduce a number of new performance measures so we can really evidence the work we do, whilst putting the community at the heart of what we do. We see the self-assessment tool as a working document which we will use to constantly re-check our approach, influencing challenge and debate within, and outside of the organisation.