

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 have adapted our approach to ensure we meet the requirements. We launched our new complaints policy in December 2020 and have continued to carry out more work to ensure we sustain improvements to our approach.

We first published our assessment in December 2020. Our subsequent assessment in April 2021 is set out below. We will review this assessment regularly. We will use complaints as part of our approach to listen to our customers to improve our services.

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? <i>We have kept exclusions to a minimum, with a focus on resolving expressions of dissatisfaction. We will assess feedback from customers to feed into future reviews of our policy to ensure that we have the right balance within the policy.</i>	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? <i>This is built into the policy and we will continually review our wider communications and reasonable adjustments document as part of our equality and diversity work.</i>	Yes
Do we regularly advise residents about the complaints process? <i>Our complaints process is visible on our website and we have run social media campaigns promoting it. We make reference to it in our newsletters but we recognise the need for some further work in this area to make it more routine.</i>	More work to do
Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	Yes

<i>Our Customer 1st Team Leader is our Complaints Officer</i>	
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?	Yes
<i>The third stage (which is optional) is a resident led panel.</i>	
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?	Stage 1
<i>In 2020-21 97% of complaints were resolved at the first stage</i>	
Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes
<i>We have built this into our new policy, ensuring extensions to timescales only happen in collaboration with residents</i>	
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
<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>	
Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes
<i>We aim to acknowledge complaints within 24 hours, but it is in our policy to always acknowledge within 5 days. In 2020-21 we acknowledged 100% of complaints within 5 days.</i>	
Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	97%
Throughout 2020-21 only one complaint escalated to stage two.	
What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	100%
<i>All complaints that went to Stage 2 were resolved at that stage</i>	
What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? Stage one (10 days) – 85% Stage one (with agreed extension) - 95% Stage two – 100% Stage two (with extension) N/A	See text
Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	Yes
<i>Practice in this area continues to improve and it is now closely monitored</i>	
Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	Yes
<i>This is a developing area but we now have visibility of all agreed extensions and these are closely monitored</i>	
What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	80%

<i>Satisfaction survey was introduced December 2020 and to date satisfaction with the outcome of complaint scores at 80%</i>	
Cooperation with the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) service – Were all requests responded to within 15 days? Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? <i>We have received no requests from the HOS this year to date (and none since 2018).</i>	N/A
Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes
If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? <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>	Yes
How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal? Did we explain our decision to the customer. <i>We have not refused to escalate any complaints this year.</i>	None
Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put this right?	Yes
What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>We have introduced a new mechanism to identify learning from complaints for all individual complaints. These are analysed and shared with staff, senior management and reported to our board quarterly</i>	Ongoing work in this area
How do we share these lessons with: a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report? <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 and will be included in the 2021 Annual report.</i> <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>	See text

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, appeals and compensation policies and introduced new performance measures, in collaboration with residents, staff and board members. This has provided greater clarity and empowerment for staff to resolve complaints. The emphasis of our approach is on resolution of the issue as rapidly as possible, and our Customer 1st team now resolve 60% of complaints within the first 24 hours of receipt.

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.