**Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:**

**Self-assessment form covering complaints responded to in 2021**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code** | | | |
| **1** | **Definition of a complaint** | **Yes** | **No** |
|  | Does the complaints process 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*. | **x** |  |
|  | Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered? | **x** |  |
|  | Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?  Evidence relied upon  Our procedure stipulates a timeframe exclusion as follows: Complaints should be made within 3 months of the incident giving rise to the concern, however Connexus may, at its discretion, consider complaints raised after 3 months  Our procedure also states that we may stop a complaint at an earlier stage, but we would explain why. This is, in accordance with Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code | **x** |  |
| **2** | **Accessibility** |  |  |
|  | Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint? | **x** |  |
|  | Is the complaints policy and procedure available online? | **x** |  |
|  | Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?  Connexus has an Equality & Diversity Policy in place and  all new policies are also subject to an equality impact assessment to ensure that no customer is disadvantaged by a policy | **x** |  |
|  | Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? | **x** |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **3** | **Complaints team and process** |  |  |
|  | Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? | **x** |  |
|  | Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? | **x** |  |
|  | Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? | **x** |  |
|  | If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? | **n/a** |  |
|  | Is any third stage optional for residents? | **n/a** |  |
|  | Does the final stage response set out residents’ right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? | **x** |  |
|  | Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? | **x** |  |
|  | At what stage are most complaints resolved? | **1** |  |
| **4** | **Communication** |  |  |
|  | Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? | **x** |  |
|  | Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? | **x** |  |
|  | Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? |  | **x**  **2 missed** |
|  | Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? | **x** |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? | **81%** | |
|  | What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? | **19%** | |
|  | What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?  January 2021 – June 2021   * Stage one   Stage one (with extension)   * Stage two   Stage two (with extension) | **61.6%**  **28.8%**  **90%**  **10%** | |
|  | Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason? | **X** |  |
|  | Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? | **x** |  |
|  | What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents’ satisfaction?  100% of complainants completing the satisfaction survey were satisfied with our complaint response, however, only 12% of complainants have completed the survey.  We therefore also look at the number of complaints that are resolved at stage 1 as an indication that customers are satisfied with the outcome. | **100%**  **81%** | |
| **5** | **Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service** |  |  |
|  | Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? | **x** |  |
|  | Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed? | **n/a** |  |
| **6** | **Fairness in complaint handling** |  |  |
|  | Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout? | **x** |  |
|  | If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand? | **x** |  |
|  | How many cases did we refuse to escalate?  What was the reason for the refusal?   1. One complaint related to historic incidences with no new evidence. The complaint had already been investigated 2. The second complaint related to issues from many years previous, all of which had been investigated/resolved 3. There was an ongoing criminal investigation about the issues raised 4. The complaint was a repetition of another recent complaint | **4** | |
|  | Did we explain our decision to the resident? | **x** |  |
| **7** | **Outcomes and remedies** |  |  |
|  | Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? | **x** |  |
| **8** | **Continuous learning and improvement** |  |  |
|  | What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?  **Be clear on the expectations of service delivery of Connexus**  The delivery of service is inconsistent which is reflected in the feedback and complaints that we receive. We will review our Customer Offer (service standards) and seek feedback from customers, but also from colleagues, to fully understand the barriers to consistently delivering a good service. Once the new Customer Offer has been defined, we will ensure customers and colleagues are clear on what customers can expect and what is expected of colleagues.  Where we have received complaints about our support services, we found that we needed clarity around the different housing management tasks that are the responsibility of different teams. We are therefore revising our internal service level agreement which will provide clarity of roles and reduce confusion, for both colleagues and customers, leading to improved customer satisfaction.  **Do what we say we will**  A simple, but clear message from the feedback is that we need to do what we say we will, such as calling our customers back. To address this, our Senior Management Team has agreed to use one system to record customer call back requests and the subsequent interaction, so that there is more transparency between teams and it is possible to track that calls are returned. This was implemented from Dec-21  **Keeping customers informed**  Training was delivered to colleagues to help improve their confidence in responding to enquiries and complaints which in turn will help address the issue that customers were not receiving information or being kept informed.  We have identified that customers are not always told when follow up work for a repair will take place. We have agreed between the repairs operative and the teams who book in the follow-on work that the customer will now receive a call within 10 working days of the initial repair to update them on any ongoing repairs.  **Proactive instead of reactive**  Complaints and feedback show that we are often reactive rather than proactive. The customer feedback forum considered opportunities to change this. The group discussed simple things such as advising customers of work which will be undertaken that will impact them, or if we become aware of an issue that could affect them, then make contact and advise. This will take time to implement. However, there are opportunities to do simple proactive work immediately, and where these are seen, the Head of Communities and the Customer Services Manager are highlighting to the relevant area of the business.  The themes of complaints for repairs correlate directly to the themes in the customer satisfaction surveys. We are therefore taking a pro-active approach and where a customer raises an issue in a survey, the respectice team are notified so that they can act to address the issues raised.  **Being clear about what we can and cannot do**  Complaint feedback showed that we need to be clearer about what Connexus can and cannot do about anti-social behaviour (ASB) We found that the expectations of the person reporting ASB were different from what was possible, leaving them feeling like we have not acted as we should have (i.e. evicted the perpetrator). We have therefore worked with the communications team to provide information and articles on ASB, focusing on what we can/cannot do and to encourage reporting, both to Connexus but also other agencies such as the police, environmental health teams and local authorities.  **Call wait times**  Due to feedback around call wait times and dissatisfaction to a colleague response, we have   * Reduced the time the customer service team have between calls so they are available for calls more often * Taken on additional customer service advisers who handle the calls about repairs * Appointed a customer service adviser to train other colleagues on the new housing system where all requests for call backs are recorded * Refreshed training approach for new colleagues * Worked with ICT to review the telephony system and address intermittent quality issues that impact on the ability of colleagues to deliver the service effectively   **The letting process**  Dissatisfaction around communication with the moving in process was identified as a key theme which our Housing team have addressed by ensuring that a member of the team makes contact with each prospective tenant via telephone, in advance of the move-in date and then also, at point of letting. We additionally advise the customer of anything still outstanding such as a repair, with a timeframe for completion as well as a point of contact for queries or questions. As a result, satisfaction has increased from 87.29% in 2020/21 to 89.39% YTD 2021/22 and we will continue to put in place processes which improve outcomes for customers moving into a Connexus home.  **Heating issues**  We have taken steps in a number of areas to address these, including:   * The creation of a ‘boilerdown’ process to ensure awareness and prompt action. * The appointment of alternative contractors to provide independent surveys on schemes where there have been ongoing heating issues. * Ensuring that where customers are provided with temporary heating, we have an agreed compensation arrangement as appropriate * The provision of regular updates to tenants and households on schemes where issues have been identified that include FAQ and information on progress in addition to having one point of contact for any queries. |  | |
|  | How do we share these lessons with:   1. residents?   Learning from complaints is updated on our website every six months.  Information about complaints is included in our customer newsletter at least once a year.   1. the board/governing body?   A bi-annual report on customer feedback is provided to the Customer Service Committee which includes details of complaints and the learning from these.   1. In the Annual Report?   The 2021 annual report shows the volume of complaints as per regulatory requirements, however, for 2022, we will look to include information that shows how Connexus has learned from complaints and any changes to service as a result. |  | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints? | **x** |  |
|  | What changes have we made?  The policy and procedure were updated in line with the requirements of the code.  We appointed a Complaints Manager to improve consistency and fairness in complaint handling.  We monitor and ensure that there is more contact with the customer during the complaint and we discuss the complaint outcome with customers before they receive the final written response. |  | |