

Appendix 1

Code Provision	Code Requirement	Commentary / Observations	Recommendation
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	<p>Paragraph 3.1 of the complaints policy states that Ongo Homes will raise a complaint if the resident is not happy with their response to their service request.</p> <p>There is no reference in the complaints policy to a complaint not preventing/stalling/impacting on actions needed to resolve any immediate issues (i.e. the service request).</p> <p>While there is no explicit reference in the complaints policy that explains Ongo Homes will not prevent/stall or impact on actions needed to resolve any immediate issues, it is noted that in the self-assessment the landlord will have an ongoing service request and a complaint logged at the same time.</p>	Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that a complaint will not prevent/stall or impact on actions needed to resolve any immediate issues (i.e. a service request).

3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	<p>Paragraph 1.3 of the landlord's policy states that it welcomes all complaints via all communication channels. This is further reiterated in paragraph 4.5 where the policy states "Complaints can be made through all communication methods which include social media platforms made directly to Ongo newsfeeds or pages".</p> <p>However, paragraph 4.4 of the complaints policy states "We cannot investigate anonymous, unsigned complaints but these may be kept on record". 'This suggests there is a requirement for a complaint to be signed, which may present a barrier for residents making a complaint and may not fully align with the landlord's stated commitment to welcoming all complaints via all communication channels (paragraph 1.3,).</p> <p>The landlord's self-assessment also provides a link listing the possible channels through which a resident can make a complaint</p> <p>Ongo Homes' complaints policy is published on the landlord's website. However, there is no evidence in the</p>	Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to ensure it reflects an accessible complaints process, welcoming all complaints via all channels, and does not inadvertently create barriers for residents wishing to make a complaint
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	<p>landlord's complaints policy on how it will consider all requests to make its policy available in an accessible format</p> <p>The self-assessment commentary refers to the policy published on Ongo Homes' website.</p> <p>Paragraph 6.2 of the complaints policy refers to the policy being published on the landlord's website along with information about the Housing Ombudsman.</p>	Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy to make clear it will consider all requests to make its policy available in an accessible format.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	<p>The landlord's self-assessment refers to paragraph 6.1 and 6.6 of the complaints policy, whereas the applicable paragraph is 6.2 (of the policy).</p>	

<p>5.6 5.7</p>	<p>5.6 - When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.</p> <p>5.7 - When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.</p>	<p>Paragraph 4.7.1 of Ongo Homes' complaints policy refers to stage 1 acknowledgement and provision 4.8.1 refers to stage 2 escalation acknowledgements.</p> <p>In both cases, although paragraph 4.7.4 states "We will discuss the findings of the investigation with you before responding with the stage 1 decision", there is no clear evidence within the landlord's policy of it setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - its understanding of the complaint - the outcomes the resident is seeking - which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for <p>Or evidence of the landlord asking the resident for clarification for any aspect of the complaint the landlord is unclear on</p> <p>The landlord's self-assessment does state "The procedure sets out the requirement to clarify the complaint definition with the Customer". However this is not clearly evidenced within the landlord's complaints policy</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to ensure it includes details on how it sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - its understanding of the complaint - the outcomes the resident is seeking - which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for <p>& if any aspect of the complaint is unclear, Ongo Homes will ask the resident for clarification</p>
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5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	<p>Paragraph 4.7.2 states " of the complaints policy refers to the landlord investigating and completing the resident's complaint within 10 working days.</p> <p>The second sentence of paragraph 4.7.2 states "If we are unable to do this, we will inform you, explain the reasons why and we will then extend the complaint timescale by no more than 10 working days".</p> <p>Provision 4.7.3 further states "We will keep you informed throughout the investigation where it has been agreed to do so".</p> <p>However, there is no explicit reference in the complaints policy of the landlord agreeing with the resident suitable intervals for being updated on their complaint, when the landlord's response falls outside of the extended timescales set out in the Code.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that it agrees with the resident suitable intervals for being updated on the complaint, when the landlord's response falls outside of the extended timescales set out in the Code.</p>
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.	<p>Paragraph 4.7.1 of the complaints policy makes it clear that stage 1 complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of the complaint being received. However the policy does not evidence that the complaint will be logged and defined at stage 1.</p> <p>Provision 6.9 of Ongo Homes' self-assessment does state "This happens on all response letters. It is clearly defined in the procedure". However there is no explicit language within the landlord's complaints policy that evidences this</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to ensure it is clear that as part of the acknowledgement process, the complaint is also logged and defined within 5 working days.</p>

6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	<p>Paragraph 4.7.2 of the policy states that if Ongo Homes is unable to complete the complaint within 10 working days, it will inform the resident, explain the reasons why and will then extend the complaint timescale by no more than 10 working days.</p> <p>However, there is no reference in the policy to extensions being no longer than 10 working days (without good reason) or the expected timescale for response.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make clear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - where a stage 1 response is not going to be provided within 10 working days (without good reason), the landlord informs the resident on the expected timescale for response
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	<p>Provision 4.7.3 of the complaints policy refers to Ongo Homes keeping the resident informed at stage 1 throughout the investigation where it has been agreed to do so.</p> <p>Provision 4.7.4 of the policy does state the landlord will discuss the findings of the investigation with the resident before responding (at stage 1) and provide the resident with a written response of its decision at that time. This may indicate that the landlord will provide a response to the resident when the answer is known, however it is not explicitly stated.</p> <p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy of the complaint response being provided to the resident when the answer is known (not when all outstanding actions are completed).</p> <p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy where the landlord demonstrates it will provide updates to the resident on outstanding actions; in specific reference to stage 1 responses or a statement covering both stage 1 and stage 2 responses.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy so it is clear that a complaint response is provided to the resident when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are complete, at stage 1.</p> <p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy so it is clear that updates are provided to the resident on outstanding actions in specific reference to stage 1 responses.</p>

6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	<p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy of the landlord incorporating any related additional complaints into the stage 1 response, if the stage 1 response has not been issued.</p> <p>Where the stage 1 response has been issued, there is no reference in the complaints policy of the landlord logging a new complaint where the resident raises further issues, unrelated issues to the issues being investigated or if the related issues would unreasonably delay the response. The landlord's self-assessment states "This is happening in practice after we learnt from a Housing Ombudsman Case. The complaint handlers are clear on this approach". However there is no evidence of this in the complaints policy.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.8.1 of the complaints policy states that Ongo Homes will log and acknowledge the complaint within five working days. However, there is no evidence in the policy that indicates that the landlord will define the complaint at stage 2</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that any related additional complaints are incorporated into the stage 1 response, if it has not been issued.</p> <p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that where the stage 1 response has been issued, any new issues, unrelated issues, or issues that would unreasonably delay the response are logged as a new complaint.</p>
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.		Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to ensure it is clear that as part of the acknowledgement process, the stage 2 escalation will also be defined.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	<p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy that explicitly states that residents are not required to provide reasons for requesting their complaint to be escalated to stage 2.</p> <p>The self-assessment states "We have changed our practice on this in line with the new code and added this into the procedure". However there is no evidence of this in the complaints policy.</p> <p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy that explains that stage 2 complaints will be considered by someone that was not involved in the complaint at stage 1.</p> <p>The landlord's self-assessment states that the landlord always escalates stage 2 complaints to an independent appropriate level leader. However, this is not reflected in the complaints policy</p>	Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that residents are not required to provide reasons for requesting their complaint to be escalated to stage 2.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.		Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to make it clear that stage 2 complaints will be considered by someone that was not involved in the complaint at stage 1.

6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	<p>Paragraph 4.8.3 of the complaints policy states "We will keep you informed throughout the investigation and will agree any extensions to timescales with you which will be no more than a further 20 working days".</p> <p>There is no evidence in the complaints policy that reflects the landlord explaining its rationale for its decision or the expected timescales for a response, following any stage 2 extension.</p> <p>The landlord's self-assessment states "This happens in practice". However, there is no evidence of this in the complaints policy</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy to make clear that when a decision is made to extend a stage 2 response, it informs the resident of its rationale for the decision and the expected timescale for the stage 2 response.</p>
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	<p>It is noted that paragraph 4.10.1 of the complaints policy states "The Housing Ombudsman Service can assist throughout the lifetime of a complaint. Complainants can discuss their ongoing complaint with the Housing Ombudsman Service".</p> <p>However, there is no explicit evidence of the landlord confirming the resident's right to approach HOS if extension timescales exceed those stated by the Code, in specific reference to stage 2 extensions or a statement covering both stage 1 and stage 2 extensions.</p> <p>The landlord's self-assessment explains that the landlord will add the Housing Ombudsman's contact details to its extension letters.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaints policy to clearly inform their residents of their rights to approach HOS if any extension timescales exceed those stated by the Code. This must be specific reference to stage 2 extensions or a statement covering both stage 1 and stage 2 extensions.</p>

6.17	<p>A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.</p>	<p>The first sentence of paragraph 4.8.4 of the complaints policy states "We will discuss the findings of the investigation with you before giving you a final written response".</p> <p>This may suggest that the complaint response is provided to the resident when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are completed. However, it is ambiguous and not explicitly stated. There is no further evidence in the complaints policy of the landlord providing a response to the resident when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are completed.</p> <p>It is noted that in paragraph 4.8.3 of the complaints policy, the landlord states that it will keep the resident informed throughout the investigation. However, it is unclear whether this is in reference to outstanding actions, specific to stage 2 responses or a statement covering both stage 1 and stage 2 responses.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy so it is clear that a complaint response is provided to the resident when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are complete.</p> <p>Recommendation: Ongo Homes should review its complaint policy so it is clear that updates are provided to the resident on outstanding actions in specific reference to stage 2 responses.</p>
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