

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code 2022
Proposals from the DMC Chairs of 2021/2 to the June 2022 DMC Round

We propose that DMCs should support their Chairs leading an initiative to:-

1. Invite all tenants and leaseholders to volunteer to join a residents' panel which would
 - a. Work with Camden's central Complaints Team and Housing Management to implement the above Code by 30th September and publish a self-assessment showing its provisions are being met;
 - b. Recommend how residents should be involved in monitoring the working of the Code in Camden including assessing lessons learned and their implementation;
 - c. Recommend if there is a useful role for residents in handling complaints and how it might be organised;
 - d. Initially report back to DMCs by 1st September and by agreement during the year 2022/3.
 - e. The panel to be established for the municipal year June 2022/3 in the first instance.
2. Seek to circulate a questionnaire on complaints handling with the invitation to assess knowledge of the complaints process and how residents might best be advised of it and use it.
3. Report back by June 2023 on experience of the panel's working and if there are lessons for future panels residents could consider setting up.

As Chairs we have been concerned about the number of issues raised in meetings which

- should have been addressed sooner and quicker through a proper complaints process;
- reflected difficulty in finding who would take responsibility for sorting issues out and updating on progress without continual nagging; and
- reflected a general opacity of who does what in Camden, how they can be contacted, and held accountable to deliver results promised personally or in service standards.

The revised Code should help because it :-

- Defines a complaint in the widest terms '*an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard 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*'.
- Sets out that the simplest complaint should be acknowledged within five days of receipt, and officers should record all actions in dealing with it and consider lessons to prevent recurrence;
- Requires that residents should be advised at all stages that they can seek advice on pursuing their complaint from the Ombudsman;
- All the while preserving the right to appeal a complaint to the Ombudsman once local processes have been exhausted. Such a complaint could cover both the results of complaining, and how the complaint was handled.

The aim is to see residents' concerns handled properly; lessons learned and implemented; and reduced time spent on individual complaints in meetings between senior staff and residents, which should focus on strategy and promoting effective and cost-effective services.

Further reading;

Housing Ombudsman; <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

The Revised Complaints Code: can be downloaded from [here](#).

The Formation of a Residents' Panel on Complaints is described [here](#).

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