

# CCH

The Confederation of  
Co-operative  
Housing

# Complaints & Housing Co-ops

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## Complaints and housing co-operatives

How many complaints does your housing co-op receive? In some co-ops, complaints may be quite rare. Members may feel in a position to get any problems that arise rectified relatively easily and may feel a sense of loyalty to the co-op that lessens their likelihood of making a complaint. Other co-ops may receive many complaints and there may be more negative reasons why members might choose not to make complaints.

In any co-op, having an effective and responsive complaints procedure is important. A co-op that has a welcoming culture towards its members (and others) making complaints is good for members and for the co-op. Complaints can be an important method by which members feedback information about services to the co-op and could be considered one part of a co-op's Active Membership Strategy.

This guidance on complaints and housing co-operatives could be useful for all our members. However, in the light of the Housing Ombudsman issuing a [Complaint Handling Code](#), there is a specific need for Registered Provider housing co-operatives to consider their approach to complaints handling to ensure that they are compliant with the Code. As well as this, CCH members who manage homes for Registered Provider landlords may wish to be aware of how the Code will affect their landlords.

The Ombudsman's Code was produced for a broad Registered Provider sector and the CCH has discussed with the Ombudsman a number of areas where sector specific issues may make implementation of the principles in the Code different for housing co-ops. This guidance considers those areas.



## Principles of handling complaints in a housing co-op

- Co-ops should have a **simple easy to use complaints policy** and procedure that enables members to easily make complaints and have them considered
- Members should be **supported to make complaints**. Members may not feel confident to make a complaint in a co-op and may express their complaint poorly. They may feel that because the co-op is run by volunteers who are their friends and neighbours that they shouldn't complain. A co-op needs to get across to its members that it is helpful that they complain where there is a need for them to do so. Complaints should be facilitated in order to resolve problems that may arise.
- Co-ops should **clarify the complaint** with the person complaining – making sure that the co-op knows what the complaint is and that it is specific and about issues that can be addressed.
- **Who can make a complaint?** Co-ops should be clear that members can make complaints, but also a range of other people and organisations, such as applicants for housing, ex members, staff, contractors, service providers, members of the public.
- **Who are they making a complaint about?** Co-ops need to be clear that if a complaint is received about its services, the co-op is responsible, regardless of whether problems lie with the co-op's staff, service provider, contractors or another organisation (although in tackling the problem the co-op may wish to address issues with its staff, service provider, contractors or another organisation).
- The focus in handling complaints should always be on **getting problems resolved**. Generally, most members complain because something hasn't been done as they would have expected and so sorting out the problem is probably going to be best for the complainant and the co-op.
- Co-ops should **keep complainants informed** about what is happening with their complaint. Co-ops should set target times for resolution of complaints but where investigations may take longer co-ops should inform the complainant about what is happening.
- Co-ops need to **keep records** about how they have handled complaints and what dialogue has taken place with relevant parties.
- Co-ops need to **learn from complaints made** and fix things that may have gone wrong. It is probable that co-op governing bodies will consider every complaint made and discuss what went wrong and what could be put right.



## The Housing Ombudsman Service and their Code

The Housing Ombudsman is appointed by Government to consider complaints about housing organisations registered with the Housing Ombudsman Service. Appointed in 2019, Richard Blakeway is the current Housing Ombudsman.

Registered Provider landlords (including Registered Provider housing co-operatives) are required by regulation to be registered with the Housing Ombudsman Service and pay an annual affiliation fee for registration.

The Housing Ombudsman Service offers the means for members of Registered Provider housing co-ops to have access to a free, independent and impartial dispute resolution service.

Non Registered Provider housing co-ops can also choose to affiliate with the Housing Ombudsman Service voluntarily if they wish to give their members access to the Ombudsman's dispute resolution services.

Registered Provider housing co-ops are required to comply with determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman Service in respect of complaints they consider and to comply with the Code they have produced.

The purpose of the Ombudsman's Code is to enable Registered Provider housing co-ops to resolve complaints raised by their members quickly and to use the learning from complaints to improve services. The Ombudsman also wishes to help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst co-op members and the staff who provide services to them.

A key part of the Ombudsman's Code is that all Registered Provider housing co-ops are required to carry out a self-assessment of their complaints policies using a format provided by the Ombudsman by the end of 2020 and then on a regular basis as needed (for example, when there have been several policy changes in the co-op or if asked to carry out a self-assessment by the Ombudsman).

## Housing co-operative sector specific issues

The CCH has raised a number of housing co-op sector specific issues with the Housing Ombudsman as follows:

- 1 **Separating complaints** – because co-ops are generally small community organisations where members know each other and those governing the co-op are amongst the community, the subject matter for complaints can sometimes get very confused. Co-ops need to separate the complaints they may receive. There may be four types of complaints in a housing co-op:



- 1) **Management or service complaints** – complaints where a service has not been provided or has been poorly provided. This is what this guidance is about, and they should be dealt with through the co-op's complaints policy.
- 2) **Governance complaints** – complaints about how a member has behaved in governance roles in the co-op. These are complaints that should be dealt with through the co-op's Code of Conduct.
- 3) **Anti-Social Behaviour issues** – issues raised by a member (or someone else) that a member or their visitors are behaving in an anti-social fashion. These should be dealt with through the Co-op's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- 4) **Neighbour Disputes** – complaints made by members about their neighbours. These should be dealt with through the Co-op's Neighbour Disputes Policy.

The Housing Ombudsman will only consider management or service complaints. However, it is important to note that anti-social behaviour or neighbour dispute complaints may become management or service complaints if complainants perceive that the co-op has not handled them as they should do. This would then mean that a member can raise possible mishandling or lack of handling of the anti-social behaviour issue or neighbour dispute with the Housing Ombudsman.

Sometimes complaints made overlap across several of these types of complaints and co-ops need to have good ways to deal with each of them. However, they need to be dealt with separately and in accordance with the relevant policy (although some of the principles for handling them may be similar).

- 2 **The definition of a management or service complaint** - the Ombudsman defines a complaint as:

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.

The Ombudsman, aiming to provide a simple and clear definition of a complaint that will ensure a user-friendly experience for the tenant, expects all Registered Provider landlords to adopt the principles in this definition of a complaint. However, the CCH has discussed with the



Ombudsman that co-ops may wish to change some of the terminology in the definition, which is potentially fine provided the principles in the definition remain the same.

For example, co-ops may wish to:

- change the word *organisation* to *co-op*
- change the word *resident* to *member*
- remove the words *its own staff* where the co-op doesn't employ staff
- add reference to the co-op's service provider where a service provider is employed.

Therefore, the Ombudsman has agreed with the CCH that the following definition, for example, would be fine because it does not change the principles behind the definition:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the co-op, by (service provider name) or by others acting on the co-op's behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members.

- 3 **Informal handling of complaints** – co-ops may wish to include reference in the complaints policy to offering complainants the opportunity to have their complaint considered informally or formally. Having a complaint considered informally would mean that the co-op should still log the complaint and would seek to resolve the problem being raised. If a complainant wants a complaint to be handled formally it means that the complaint goes through a formal complaint procedure. Sometimes complainants would prefer not to go through a formal procedure and just want a problem resolved. If an informal complaint is not handled to the complainant's satisfaction, they would still have the option to make a formal complaint.
- 4 **Informing members** – the Code requires that Registered Provider housing co-ops inform their members about their complaints policy and their right to access to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Code specifically refers to including information on the websites of Registered Provider landlords. The CCH has confirmed with the Ombudsman that there is not an expectation that Registered Provider housing co-ops set up websites if they do not already have them, but co-ops are expected to ensure that all members are aware of the complaints policy by whatever written communication means the co-op uses. Co-ops may be required to demonstrate that they have communicated in these ways.



The Housing Ombudsman also requires Registered Provider landlords to publish their self-assessment on their websites, and if the Ombudsman receives a complaint from a resident of a Registered Provider, the Ombudsman will examine the self-assessment provided on the website. If a co-op does not have a website, the Ombudsman has said to the CCH, that Registered Provider co-ops can send their self-assessments to the Ombudsman and they will keep them on record if a complaint is received from a member of that co-op.

5 **Complaints Officers** – the Ombudsman Code requires that Registered Providers appoint Complaints Officers who deal with complaints. The Code defines that Complaints Officers should:

- be able to act sensitively and fairly
- be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents
- have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints
- have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

Co-ops could choose to use its volunteers, its own staff or staff from service providers, or someone else to act as its Complaints Officers, but each approach may provide different challenges for co-ops.

Our general advice is that those investigating complaints should be independent of the complaint. Most co-ops either employ staff or a service provider to provide some or all of their services and so it is quite possible that when complaints are made, they will be about something that the staff or service provider have or haven't done. This therefore suggests that achieving independence in the complaint investigation may be best done through using volunteer governing body members to carry out the investigation (provided the complaint does not involve those governing body members).

This may create some problems regarding achieving the timescales envisaged in the Ombudsman Code. As well as this, either volunteer or staff Complaints Officers having the authority and autonomy to resolve disputes may be difficult for co-ops, because this may involve them in making policy decisions that it may not be possible or desirable for the co-op's governing body to delegate to that level.

The CCH has discussed with the Ombudsman that there may be a need for the Ombudsman to take on board the co-op's democratic decision-making processes with regards decisions that have to be made to resolve complaints. It should be noted that the Ombudsman positively



recognises the value of having co-op member/tenant involvement in resolving complaints.

- 6 **Two stage procedures** – the Ombudsman is placing emphasis on Registered Provider landlords having only two stages to a complaint procedure (but they allow for a third stage where a landlord considers it vital). The CCH agrees that a two-stage procedure should be sufficient – ie. consisting of an investigation and a review of any decisions. Some co-ops in the past have had cumbersome complaints procedures that ultimately end up in a General Meeting. This would not be considered appropriate under the Ombudsman Code.
- 7 **Timescales** – the Ombudsman Code envisages Registered Provider landlords setting target times for the resolution of complaints – one week or 5 working days to log a complaint; two weeks or 10 working days for the investigation stage of a complaint; and four weeks or 20 working days to hold a review of a complaint. The Code reflects that an additional two weeks or 10 working days can be used if there is a need to do so at the investigation and review stages, but that there needs to be a valid reason for such a delay.

Given that co-ops may be reliant on volunteer governing body members to investigate complaints and then on returning the results of the investigation to the co-op's governing body to ratify proposed decisions, it may be challenging to achieve the conclusion of a co-op complaint investigation in two weeks or 10 working days (or even in some cases four weeks or 20 working days). The CCH is not aware of many (indeed if any) complaints that have gone to a review stage, but if a complaint did so, this may be further complicated for a co-op in that it would usually be expected that whoever sits on a review panel would be independent of both the complaint and those who investigated it. Assembling a complaint review panel in a small community co-op that has that level of independence is likely to take time and may not be achievable within four weeks or 20 working days.

Our advice to co-ops is that they need to set the Ombudsman's target timescales but be realistic in achieving them and keep the complainant informed if the target times cannot be achieved and the reasons why.

- 8 **Learning and improvement** – the Ombudsman's Code refers to Registered Provider landlords learning from complaints and taking account of "trends" of complaints. The CCH made it clear to the Ombudsman that co-ops usually do not have enough complaints to learn from "trends", but that co-op governing bodies are likely to consider each complaint to learn lessons from them. The Ombudsman was satisfied with that approach.



## Compliance with the Code

A new Housing Ombudsman Scheme is coming into force from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. Most of this Scheme already applies to Registered Provider housing co-ops in that they are expected to be affiliated to the Ombudsman, inform their members that they can refer complaints to the Ombudsman and respond appropriately to the Ombudsman if they receive a complaint from a member of the co-op. However, the new scheme also requires Registered Provider landlords to comply with the Complaint Handling Code and the Ombudsman has new powers to carry out a wider investigation where there is evidence of a systemic failure and to issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order.

The new power to issue a Complaint Handling Failure Orders may result from:

- failure to accept a complaint within a reasonable timeframe, or not accepting a complaint without good reason
- an inaccessible complaints procedure
- not managing complaints in accordance with the complaints policy
- failure to progress a complaint through procedure or respond within timescales without good reason
- failure to notify members of their right to refer the complaint to Ombudsman
- failure to provide evidence to support investigation by the Ombudsman
- failure to comply with the Ombudsman's orders
- failure to comply in some other way with the Complaint Handling code.

The Housing Ombudsman is only likely to investigate a Registered Provider co-op's compliance with the Complaint Handling Code if it receives a complaint from a co-op member. If they do, they will want to see the co-op's Complaints Policy and their self-assessment in the format determined by the Ombudsman. Dependent on the nature of complaints they receive, they may wish to investigate root causes that give rise to complaints.

Clearly the CCH's advice to Registered Provider housing co-op members is that they should comply with the Ombudsman scheme and carry out the self-assessment required by the Ombudsman by the end of 2020 as required and on a regular basis as needed after that.

## Developing a complaints policy

We have provided below a framework for developing a complaints policy. It has been designed to enable Registered Provider housing co-ops to produce a complaints policy of their own that is compliant with the Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, but non Registered Provider housing co-ops may be able to adapt it to fit their needs also. The Ombudsman has also provided guidance for landlords on developing a complaints policy – available [here](#).



## COMPLAINTS POLICY TEMPLATE

### Aims of the complaints policy

The following may be aims of the complaints policy:

- To ensure that members and others have the right to complain about the provision, or non-provision, of services through an accessible, confidential and easy to use procedure, which offers rapid action and response
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and fairly, even where complaints outcomes are not to the satisfaction of the complainant
- To ensure that complaints are taken seriously and used positively to improve how the co-op operates
- To ensure for Registered Provider housing co-ops that the complaints procedure complies with the Involvement and Empowerment standard and with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

- 1 **Welcoming complaints** - a co-op should welcome complaints from its members and encourage anyone using or directly affected by its services to make complaints. A member does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as a complaint.
- 2 Co-ops should also accept complaints from agencies and others representing complainants (although the co-op needs to have written evidence that anyone representing a complainant is authorised by the complainant to act on their behalf). The co-op should usually allow such representatives to attend meetings with the complainant if the complainant wishes them to.
- 3 A complainant could also be anyone who is affected by a decision or action taken by the co-op, including:
  - any non-member service users and ex-service users
  - applicants for housing
  - partnership organisations and agencies
  - contractors or consultants
  - neighbours to co-op properties
  - other members of the public.
- 4 **Resolving complaints informally** – co-ops may wish to offer complainants the opportunity to have their complaint resolved informally without the need to use the complaints procedure. Resolving a complaint informally means logging the complaint, agreeing how the problem will be resolved with the complainant, and then ensuring that the action agreed is carried out. It should be the decision of the complainant



whether their complaint is dealt with informally and they should always have the right to make a formal complaint that is dealt with in accordance with the complaint procedure.

- 5 **What is a complaint?** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the co-op, by (*service provider name*) or by others acting on its behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members.

A complaint, whether justified or not, may be about something that the co-op should or should not have done or has done badly or has done or not done in accordance with its policies. A complaint may also be about a complainant feeling that they have not been treated fairly or they have been discriminated against in the provision of a service.

- 6 Co-ops should accept and act on complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 7 The following would not usually be considered through a co-op's complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to consider them:
- requests for a particular service (eg. a complaint about a repair or something else that has not yet been requested)
  - requests to deal with an Anti-Social Behaviour issue or Neighbour Nuisance or Neighbour Disputes which should be dealt with in accordance with relevant policies
  - new issues that arise during a complaints investigation unless they are relevant to the complaint under investigation
  - anonymous complaints
  - matters that relate to legal proceedings that have started
  - complaints about something more than six months old
  - matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy
  - issues relating to how the co-op is governed which need to be dealt with through the co-op's Code of Conduct.
- 8 If a co-op chooses not to receive a complaint for one of the above reasons, it should formally write to the complainant setting out its reasons why.
- 9 **Receiving complaints** – the co-op needs to decide on multiple ways that members can make complaints. This might be by phone, by letter, by email, through the co-op's website (if it has one), through social media, through speaking to someone who represents the co-op, or by other means.



- 10 Co-ops should consider how they will maintain confidentiality in the handling of complaints to those managing them. Every appropriate effort should be made to resolve complaints straight away and without a formal process. Emphasis should be placed on correcting any service that has failed.
- 11 Co-ops should comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt their normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual member's needs.
- 12 **Complaints Officers** – the co-op should designate someone (or more than one person) to be a Complaints Officer. This could be a member of the co-op's governing body or someone who works for the co-op, but individual Complaints Officers managing complaints should be independent of the complaint being managed.
- 13 Complaints Officers should be competent, empathetic and efficient. They should be able to act sensitively and fairly; should be able to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset members; should have access to individuals in the co-op at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints. Wherever possible, they should have the authority in the co-op to make decisions to resolve the complaint, although it is often the case that complaints are complex and refer to matters that are not covered by co-op policies and therefore may require consideration by the governing body.
- 14 Complaints Officers should take responsibility for ensuring that receipt of the complaint is acknowledged; that an investigation of the complaint takes place; and that there is communication with the complainant throughout and regarding outcomes.
- 15 **Complaints procedure** – co-ops should manage complaints as follows:
  - **Acknowledgement and logging** - complaints should be acknowledged and logged when received
  - **Confirmation of the complaint** - The co-op should confirm in writing to the complainant what the complainant is complaining about. The co-op should encourage complainants to be specific about what they are complaining about and what outcomes they are seeking from the co-op.
  - **Investigation** - Complaints Officers independent to the complaint should investigate the complaint – giving the complainant and any other parties to the complaint the opportunity to state their views on the subject matter of the complaint. Matters that are easily resolvable in the complaint should be addressed as soon as possible.
  - **Decision-making** – Complaints Officers (or the governing body of the co-op in some cases) need to decide their approach to resolution of



the complaint and this should be communicated to the complainant

- **Review** – if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a review and this should be heard by someone independent of the complaint so far – offering the complainant and other parties to the complaint the opportunity to put forward their views. The outcome of the review should be communicated to the complainant and this concludes the co-op's complaints procedure.
- **Further stages** – co-ops are encouraged not to have further stages to the complaint procedure

- 16 The co-op should set the following maximum target times for the complaint procedure:

Complaints procedure	Timescales
Logging and acknowledgement of the complaint	One week or 5 working days
Results of the investigation of a complaint	Two weeks or 10 working days from receipt of the complaint
Results of a subsequent review of a complaint	Four weeks or 20 working days from the request for a review

- 17 If it is not possible for the co-op to achieve these timescales, the co-op should communicate how much extra time is needed to the complainant and the reasons why there will be a delay. The target times for the investigation and review stages should not be exceeded by more than two weeks or 10 working days without good reason.
- 18 If a co-op chooses not to either investigate a complaint or to hold a review when asked, it needs to be clear about its reasons why it is not so doing, and these reasons need to be communicated to the complainant.
- 19 **Communications** – co-ops should make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for members. Dependent on how co-ops communicate with their members, it should be publicised in leaflets, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with members. Co-ops should provide copies of the complaint policy to members on request. If the co-op has a website, the complaints policy should be easily found and downloadable.
- 20 Registered Provider co-ops should provide members with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of their regular correspondence with members. Co-ops should tell their members that they can access the Housing Ombudsman Service when they wish to and not just when they have exhausted the co-op's complaints process, and that the



Housing Ombudsman Service can assist members throughout the life of a complaint.

- 21 When communicating with members about complaints, co-ops should use plain language. Co-ops should address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 22 At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) the co-op should write to the member to say:
  - what the outcome of their complaint is
  - the reasons why decisions have been made
  - what offers the co-op is making to put things right
  - what actions remain outstanding
  - how the complainant can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or what the co-op is offering
  - that the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 23 During the complaint investigation and in any review, members should be given a fair opportunity to set out their views, and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.
- 24 Communication with the complainant should not generally identify individuals involved in delivering the service (volunteers, staff, service provider or contractors) because all are acting on behalf of the co-op. Whilst the co-op should seek to put right any problems and learn from mistakes, the co-op should not seek to blame the co-op's staff or service provider to the complainant.
- 25 The co-op should keep complainants regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.
- 26 **The Housing Ombudsman Service** – if the co-op is a Registered Provider and if the member remains dissatisfied at the end of the co-op's complaints procedure, they may bring their complaint to the Ombudsman. Co-ops should co-operate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 3 weeks or 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the co-op needs to provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date with the co-op.
- 27 **Keeping records** – a co-op should document all informal and formal complaints and their follow through and should keep copies of all complaint correspondence to and from the complainant. The



Complaints Officer should be responsible for ensuring that outcomes to complaints are implemented.

- 28 **Learning from complaints** – a co-op's governing body should consider all complaints it has received and what could be improved as a result of the complaint.

#### **Potential risks to be avoided**

- Members are deterred from complaining when there is reason for them to do so or are dissatisfied with the outcome
- The housing co-op considers that members should not make complaints because it is a co-op
- The co-op does not follow through on complaints
- A Registered Provider co-op does not manage complaints in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements



## The Ombudsman's self-assessment form

The Ombudsman's self-assessment form – aimed at assisting Registered Provider landlords assess their compliance with the Complaint Handling Code – is included in their Code publication.

For ease of reference, the CCH has gone through the self-assessment form and has identified where in our policy template above we have considered the relevant question. The CCH has submitted this guidance to the Housing Ombudsman Service for their consideration and so what is provided in this guidance should be sufficient to enable CCH member Registered Provider co-ops to comply with the Code.

The Ombudsman has indicated that the self-assessment form is *comply or explain* – ie. that either a Registered Provider landlord complies with what their Code requires, or they set out the reasons why their circumstances make it not possible to comply. We have set out specific co-op sectoral reasons why it may not be possible to fully comply which co-ops may use in their explanation.

		Notes	Policy clause
<b>1</b>	<b>Definition of a complaint</b>		
	Does the complaints process use the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint?	Alternative terminology may be appropriate as noted above but the principles in the definition must remain the same	2
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?		5
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon	Yes – CCH member Registered Provider housing co-ops may rely on the evidence of this guidance if they copy what we have included in the guidance	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for members to make a complaint?		7
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	If the co-op does not have a website, it should state that it does not have a website	7



	Notes	Policy clause
Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	ie. does the co-op adjust its approaches to respond to the needs of its members?	11
<b>3 Complaints team and process</b>		
Is there a complaints officer or equivalent in post?	It is possible that there will be more than one complaints officer in a co-op; they may be volunteer governing body members, staff (directly employed or from a service provider); or someone else	12
Does the complaints officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	Complaints officers in a housing co-op may have some limited autonomy to resolve complaints, but a co-op's democracy will require that policy matters are referred back to the governing body	13
Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	Housing co-ops are unlikely to have "other departments", but it is expected that complaints officers should be able to engage with governing body members, staff and others involved in the complaint	
If there is a third stage to the complaint procedure are members involved in the decision-making?	Co-ops should not have third stages to their complaint procedure. Members should be involved in decision-making in complaints handling in a co-op	15
Is any third stage optional for members?	Co-ops should not have third stages to their complaint procedure. If they do – it certainly should not be a requirement for members.	15
Does the final stage response set out member rights to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?		22



		Notes	Policy clause
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the member?		27
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Hopefully in a housing co-op most complaints are dealt with at the informal stage	5
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are members kept informed and updated during the complaints process?		22/25
	Are members informed of the co-op's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?		23
	Are all complaints acknowledged within a week?	This should be the co-op's target	15/16
	Are members advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?		22
	What proportion of complaints are resolved in the investigation stage?		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved in the review stage?	The CCH is not aware of many (if any) complaints going to a review stage in a co-op	
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The investigation stage within two weeks</li> <li>The investigation stage within four weeks</li> <li>The review stage within four weeks</li> <li>The review stage within six weeks</li> </ul>	The involvement of volunteers in co-ops may mean that timescales may not be met. Co-ops should document where timescales have not been met, the reasons why they have not been met and how members have been informed if they have not or will not be met	16
	Where timescales have been extended, did we have good reason?		17
	Where timescales have been extended, did we keep the member informed?		17



		Notes	Policy clause
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to member satisfaction?	Co-ops should ask members if they are satisfied with complaint handling once completed	
<b>5</b>	<b>Co-operation with the Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within three weeks?		26
	Where the timescale was extended, did we keep the Ombudsman informed?		26
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are members able to complain via a representative throughout?		2
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?		21
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the escalation?	Escalate means either to hear a complaint at all from a member or to enable a review if the member is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation stage	18
	Did we explain our decision to the member?		18
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong, are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?		
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made because of learning from complaints?		28
	How do we share these lessons with members, the governing body and in the annual report?	In a co-op, it will be the governing body that will consider complaints. The annual report should include information about complaints.	



		Notes	Policy clause
	Has the Complaint Handling Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	In the initial stages, it is anticipated that co-ops will have changed their complaints policy as a result of the Code	
	What changes have we made?		



## Complaints form

Please ask a co-op representative if you need help to complete this form. The Complaints Form will be completed by or with the complainant if you are reporting it in person or by phone, and by a co-op representative if you have reported the complaint by email, online or by letter. If it has been completed by a co-op representative, the form will be given or sent to the complainant to check and to sign – possibly at a later date.

Your details (please include joint tenants where applicable)

Complainant details			
Name (ie. your name)			
Address (ie. your address)			
Are you:			
A co-op member?			
Someone else?		Please specify the nature of your relationship with the co-op:	
Contact details			
Home phone		Work phone	
Mobile		e-mail address	

Your complaint could be about something that the co-op should or should not have done or has done badly or unfairly, or about something that the co-op has done or not done in accordance with our policies and procedures, about the way that a complainant has been treated in the provision of a service, or about a complainant feeling that they have been discriminated against in relation to a service provision. This may include the co-op taking too long to provide a particular service, not doing something a policy says will be done, giving someone wrong information or misinforming them, treating someone unfairly in relation to delivery of a service, making a commitment which has not been kept or another service matter. We will advise you if the matter you are raising should not be dealt with as a complaint.

Please tell us about your complaint. Try to include as much detail as possible, including dates and times when things happened and specifying any individual people involved. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

What would you like to see happen to help resolve your complaint?



Would you like your complaint to be:	<input type="checkbox"/> A formal complaint <input type="checkbox"/> An informal complaint (please tick one box)
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A **formal complaint** means that a formal procedure will be carried out to manage the complaint. We will still seek to resolve whatever problems you have raised.

An **informal complaint** means that the complaint will be logged, but attention will be solely focused on resolving the problem and no formal procedure will be carried out.

If you have not reported your complaint in person or by phone, it has been assumed that you wish your complaint to be managed formally.

Please tell us about any special or communication needs you have where you will need particular assistance in discussing your complaint with us (such as language issues or physical or other issues)?

I believe the information I have given on this Complaints Form to be true and accurate

SIGNED (COMPLAINANT)	
DATE OF SIGNING	

My complaint was reported:	<input type="checkbox"/> by me coming to a co-op office <input type="checkbox"/> on the phone <input type="checkbox"/> by email <input type="checkbox"/> using the online form on the co-op website <input type="checkbox"/> by letter (please tick one box)
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For co-op use only:

Name of the co-op representative who received the complaint			
NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE			
REPRESENTATIVE ROLE			
DATE COMPLAINT RECEIVED		COMPLAINT REFERENCE	

The completed Complaints Form should be scanned and logged

