

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and Complaint Handling Code Self-assessment - London Borough of Camden 2023-2024	
REPORT OF The Borough Solicitor	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Resources and Corporate Performance (RCP) Scrutiny Committee Housing Scrutiny Committee	DATE 15th July 2024 16 th July 2024
STRATEGIC CONTEXT We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. In the partner document The Way We Work which is how we will change as an organisation to deliver our shared priorities we have said that we are committed to connecting to our communities and listening and responding to make change to what we hear. This report contributes to the Council’s aspirations by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from our citizens that inform us when things have gone wrong. Learning from these gives the Council the opportunity to improve services to support our citizens. The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code was updated and became a joint Code with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and compliance with the Code became mandatory for all Social Housing Landlords from 1 st April 2024. The Code sets out good practice that provide guidance on how the Council should respond to complaints effectively and fairly and as a consequence meet the aspirations in the Way We Work. Camden must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT The Housing Ombudsman requires all Landlords to produce a report annually. The report must contain the following key elements:	

- Annual self-assessment
- Analysis of Housing complaints performance
- Any findings of non-compliance
- Service Improvements made
- Housing Ombudsman Annual Report on the Landlord
- Any other relevant reports.

It is a requirement to present this report to the relevant governing bodies and to publish the governing bodies' response alongside the report and self-assessment.

In Camden the governing bodies have been agreed as the RCP Scrutiny Committee and Housing Scrutiny Committee. This is the first report following the new requirements and has been developed in an accessible and easy to understand format. Members are an important source of insight and intelligence on concerns raised by residents and communities.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No previously unpublished documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report as required by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Contact Officer:

Jim Read, Service Manager – Information Governance
Business Support Service
5 Pancras Square
London N1C 4AG
020 7974 6093
jim.read@camden.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee and Housing Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide a response to the report, which the Housing Ombudsman requires the Council to publish alongside the self-assessment.

Signed:



Andrew Maughan
Borough Solicitor
Corporate Services

Date:

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 We are committed to being a listening and learning Council and The Way We Work is our Council call to action to address complex issues and work with our communities to make them better. We are continuing to adapt how we work and how we respond to issues and concerns to ensure we are working in an open and human-centred way. An effective complaints process enables the Council to learn from the issues that arise for residents and to take steps to improve the services it provides. Complaint handling performs an important strategic role for the Council, providing vital intelligence on its performance, culture and reputation.
- 1.2 The Complaints Handling Code was introduced as part of the Ombudsman's new powers in the revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme in 2022. The Code was updated and became a joint Code with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) from 1st April 2024. Compliance with the Code is mandatory for landlords who are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme but compliance is not mandatory but is recommended for LGSCO complaints handling.
- 1.3 Since the Code was introduced, the Council has used it as the basis for effective complaint handling for all complaints, not just Housing complaints.
- 1.4 This report only deals with Housing complaints that are of relevance to the Housing Ombudsman and the Social Housing Regulator. Therefore the complaints highlighted relate to services provided by the Housing and Property Divisions within the Supporting Communities Directorate.
- 1.5 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also identifies key themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.
- 1.6 The relevant Heads of Service have contributed to the report and the report has been considered by senior managers. They have added their comments and feedback as well as having had the opportunity to consider how the report and details concerning their service could influence future service delivery and practice generally.
- 1.7 The purpose of the Code is to enable the Council to resolve complaints relating to Housing and Property Services raised by its residents effectively and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. The Code supports the regulatory approach to complaints ensuring that a landlord's approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
- 1.8 The Code acts as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from the Council when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the Council's complaints procedure.

- 1.9 In October 2022 it became mandatory for landlords to complete a self-assessment demonstrating that their policies and procedures were compliant. From 1st April 2024 the Code made it mandatory to also produce an annual complaint handling and service improvement report alongside the self-assessment. The standard practice is that the Corporate wide Annual Complaints report is produced in the Autumn, once thorough analysis of the date has been carried out. However, due to the earlier deadline from the Housing Ombudsman this report has been produced ahead of the Council wide Annual Complaints Report.
- 1.10 The data used in the self-assessment and annual housing complaints handling report is taken from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Annual Data Return 2023/2024 that is submitted to the Social Housing Regulator in June each year.
- 1.11 Therefore, the above only relates to Housing complaints handling data and are supplementary reports that will be incorporated into the wider and more comprehensive Corporate Annual Complaints Report which is prepared later in the year.

2. Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2023/2024

- 2.1 The Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement report for 2023-24 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The Housing Ombudsman Service's Landlord report is attached as Appendix 2'.
- 2.2 The Annual Complaint and Service Improvement report for the London Borough of Camden 2023/24 contributes to the Council's aspirations by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from our citizens that inform us when things have gone wrong. Learning from these gives the Council the opportunity to improve services to support our citizens.
- 2.3 The report contains the following for 2023-24:
- Analysis of Housing complaints performance
 - Any findings of non-compliance
 - Service Improvements made
- 2.4 The Housing Ombudsman Landlord Report for Camden Council 2022-23 is the annual report produced by the Housing Ombudsman containing data, feedback and recommendations, based on Camden Council's performance. It is noted that this report relates to the previous year (2022-23) as the Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its Landlord Report for 2023-24.
- 2.5 The Committees are asked to provide a response including reflections on the Council's performance, service improvements and overall themes.

3. Annual Self-Assessment

3.1 The Councils Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment submission is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. The purpose of the HO self-assessment is to set out how landlords demonstrate their complaint handling service complies with the provisions of the Code. In addition, the self-assessment also supports landlords to inform residents about service provision.

3.2 Due to the timelines set out by the Housing Ombudsman for the submission of the Self- Assessment the following two areas are where the Council will be in the process of complying at the time the self-assessment has to be submitted (30th June 2024).

- Complaints Policy and procedure annual review
- Housing annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report and Governing bodies response

3.3 It is worth noting that the Housing Ombudsman has accepted that some Landlords, particularly Local Authorities, are dependent on the Governing Bodies' timetables so may not be able to have full compliance by the 30th June 2024. Where a reasonable date for compliance is given, The Housing Ombudsman has advised that they will not take action.

4. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

4.1 The Complaints service is funded from existing general fund resources. Financial remedies are paid from directorate services' budgets. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted and has no comments to add.

5. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

5.1 The Housing Ombudsman requires all members who are social housing landlords to comply with its Complaints Handling Code (2022) and to provide a self-assessment evidencing compliance. Failure to follow the Code may result in the Ombudsman issuing a Complaint Handling Failure Order.

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 The information and data presented in this report have no environmental implications.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – HOS Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report
LBC 23~24

Appendix 2 – HO~Landlord Report~Camden Council 2022~2023

Appendix 3 – LB Camden HOS Self Assessment CHC Jun 2024

REPORT ENDS