



## 2024-Self-Assessment of Complaint Handling

In accordance with the new Complaint Handling Code issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service

## **1. Introduction**

Karin Housing Association, as a community-based organisation, places a strong emphasis on fostering positive relationships with its tenants, leading to the resolution of most issues informally and verbally. This self-assessment evaluates Karin Housing Association's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code ('the Code'), examining the organisation's complaint handling processes, accessibility, and effectiveness.

### **2. Accessibility and Awareness of Complaints Procedure**

Requirement from the Code:

- Ensure that the complaints procedure is clear, easily accessible, and well-communicated to residents.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

Karin Housing Association has ensured that tenants are fully aware of how to raise complaints, either verbally or formally, through multiple channels including in-person visits, phone calls, or online submissions. The complaints policy is readily available in accessible formats, and information about the process is prominently displayed in public areas. Tenants are regularly informed of their rights to escalate concerns if not addressed satisfactorily at the initial stage.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association is fully compliant with this requirement. The accessibility of the process and the clear communication of complaint rights has contributed to the low number of formal complaints.

### **3. Early Resolution and Informal Complaints Handling**

Requirement from the Code:

- Encourage early resolution of complaints before formal escalation. Ensure informal complaints are recorded and addressed effectively.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

Karin Housing Association's complaint resolution strategy prioritizes early intervention. A significant number of complaints—especially those related to repairs and maintenance—are resolved verbally, ensuring swift action without the need for formal escalation. This is in line with the organisation's focus on building rapport and resolving tenant issues in a collaborative manner.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association has successfully implemented early resolution practices, as evidenced by the low number of escalated formal or informal complaints. The ability

to resolve 98 repair-related complaints informally showcases the effectiveness of this approach.

#### **4. Complaint Response Times and Stages**

Requirement from the Code:

- Acknowledge and respond to complaints within the set timescales: Stage 1 responses within 10 working days, and Stage 2 reviews within 20 working days.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

The organisation adheres to the Code's specified response times. Verbal complaints are addressed immediately or within a few days, and any unresolved concerns are escalated to Stage 1, with a response provided within 10 working days. To date, no formal complaints have escalated beyond Stage 1, demonstrating the effectiveness of the initial response phase.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association complies with the complaint response time requirements. The absence of unresolved complaints and escalations to Stage 2 suggests that tenants are generally satisfied with the timeliness of resolutions.

#### **5. Recording and Monitoring of Complaints**

Requirement from the Code:

- Ensure that all complaints, even informal ones, are recorded and monitored to identify trends, areas for improvement, and opportunities for service development.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

All complaints, whether formal or informal, are logged and categorised by type. Data is regularly reviewed to identify recurring issues, particularly in repairs and maintenance, which made up the majority of complaints (98 out of 100). This data-driven approach has allowed Karin Housing Association to prioritize communication improvements and increase contractor accountability in handling repairs.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association is compliant with the Code's requirements for recording and monitoring complaints. Regular data analysis helps inform service improvements and prevents the reoccurrence of similar issues.

## **6. Training and Continuous Improvement**

Requirement from the Code:

- Ensure staff handling complaints are appropriately trained and supported to ensure the efficient and effective handling of complaints.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

Karin Housing Association's staff receive ongoing training in complaint handling, focusing on empathy, communication, and resolution techniques. This training helps staff manage tenant concerns at the earliest stage and ensures that more complex complaints are escalated appropriately. The organisation has also emphasized improving tenant-staff communication to enhance satisfaction.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association meets the Code's training requirements. The commitment to continuous improvement and training has contributed to the positive rapport between staff and tenants, reflected in the absence of complaints against staff and the low escalation rate of issues.

## **7. Transparency and Accountability**

Requirement from the Code:

- Be transparent in how complaints are handled, ensuring tenants are kept informed throughout the process and that outcomes are communicated clearly.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

Karin Housing Association ensures that tenants are kept informed of the status of their complaints and receive clear communication regarding the resolution process. Verbal updates are given for informal complaints, and formal complaints are accompanied by written acknowledgements and responses within the appropriate timeframes. All outcomes, particularly in maintenance-related complaints, are communicated clearly to manage expectations.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association is compliant with this aspect of the Code. Clear communication and transparency in handling complaints have been central to the organisation's approach, ensuring high levels of tenant satisfaction and trust.

## **8. Continuous Feedback and Learning**

Requirement from the Code:

- Use complaint outcomes to improve services and feedback processes, and promote a culture of learning from complaints.

Karin Housing Association's Approach and Compliance:

Karin Housing Association actively uses complaint data to inform service improvements. For example, trends in repair complaints have led to better communication of timelines and increased focus on contractor performance. Additionally, the single harassment and nuisance complaint was handled with mediation, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to tenant well-being.

Assessment:

Karin Housing Association complies with this requirement. The organisation's proactive approach to using complaint data to inform service improvements ensures continuous development and enhances tenant experiences.

## **9. Action Plan and Future Improvements**

Areas for Further Improvement:

- Enhanced Communication for Repairs:

While most repair issues are resolved, there is a need to further improve communication regarding repair timeframes and expectations to prevent dissatisfaction.

- Increase Preventative Maintenance:

Regular checks on building infrastructure will help reduce the number of repair-related complaints.

- Expand Mediation Services:

Although tenant conflicts are minimal, expanding mediation services can help address the rare occurrences of nuisance complaints before they escalate.

## **10. Conclusion**

Karin Housing Association demonstrates full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code. The organisation's commitment to early intervention, strong communication, and ongoing staff training ensures complaints are handled efficiently and effectively. This self-assessment highlights Karin Housing Association's success in preventing escalation, maintaining transparency, and continuously learning from complaints to improve services. Moving forward, Karin Housing Association will focus on refining processes and implementing the outlined improvements to continue meeting and exceeding the Code's requirements.

Person Responsible for the review of this Report:

Date of this review:

Date next review is due:

Zahra Hassan

May 2024

May 2025