

## **Housing Ombudsman Consultation- Revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme**

### **Que. 1 Do you have any comments on the changes proposed to improve accessibility to the complaints' procedure?**

The proposed changes are sensible. Many of our members undertake reviews of their complaints' procedures in partnership with tenant scrutiny panels, and we would expect this to form part of the Housing Ombudsman best practice. Where a landlord can demonstrate that the procedure has been established and agreed through effective local tenant consultation, and that it works, then the Ombudsman should not be too prescriptive as to the detail of the procedure. There should also be a mechanism that allows landlords to escalate tenant feedback to the Ombudsman to update their best practice guidelines.

We assume that best practice will include using plain English standards, exploring presentation of information (e.g. infographics or pictorial representation for those who are more visual learners or where English is not the primary language). It is always useful to share best practice examples across the sector for comparison.

There should also be a requirement for member landlords to review their complaints procedure at an agreed timeframe.

### **2. Do you have any thoughts on the proposed changes to help landlords and residents to resolve complaints themselves?**

We agree that the activities the Ombudsman undertakes around training, website tools and shared learning should be incorporated into the scheme as proposed. We also have no issues with giving clarity to residents that they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point, therefore the proposed mechanism to stop complaints getting lost is also sensible.

However, it would be good for the Ombudsman to provide guidance to landlords as to how they can support tenants back into the landlord complaint service if it has not been finished. It would also be good once this has been operating for a reasonable length of time to analyse why people are contacting the Ombudsman early (e.g. have they not understood the landlord's complaints procedure, do they not trust their landlord, do they not understand the role of the Ombudsman etc.?)

### **3. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to raising the visibility of complaints?**

We have no comments on this – they seem sensible proposals.

### **4. Do you have any thoughts on the changes outlined to extend the reach of investigations?**

The proposals outlined in 'Extending the reach of Ombudsman investigations' are sensible, and responsible landlords should not be afraid of them. The NFA is supportive of the Regulator and the Ombudsman working more closely together and sharing information as this should drive improvements across the whole sector.

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