






A5: Appendix B: Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code


Section 1: Definition of a complaint


Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i></p>		Housing Complaints Policy	The Council's Housing Complaints Policy adopts the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint.
1.3	<p>A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.</p>		Housing Complaints Policy	<p>Our Housing Complaints Policy explains what an "expression of dissatisfaction" means and confirms that the complainant does not have to use the word "complaint" when expressing dissatisfaction.</p> <p>The policy also explains that a third party i.e. someone acting on behalf of a person or organisation receiving or seeking to receive a service from the Council (e.g. Councillor, MP, next of kin), may use the complaints process.</p> <p>Information is also provided about organisations that may assist a person in making a complaint and staff will signpost to these where applicable.</p>


1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.		Housing Complaints Policy	<p>Our Complaints Policy explains that a first time request for a service or for information from the Council is not viewed as a complaint. This would be classed as a service request.</p> <p>However, a repeated request or if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue will then be logged as a complaint</p>
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.		Housing Complaints Policy	Our Policy states that, if a resident expresses dissatisfaction with our response to their service request, this would be classed as a complaint even if we are still handling their request.
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider		Housing Complaints Policy Response letter to transactional surveys	We often ask residents to complete surveys – for example, after major maintenance or improvement works have been carried out. Any dissatisfaction expressed through these surveys would not be defined as a complaint although we will make respondents aware of how they can pursue a complaint. A revision has been made to our processes so that any



	feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.			<p>tenant expressing dissatisfaction via a transactional survey is advised of how to submit a formal complaints.</p> <p>Regular articles will also be included in tenants newsletters explaining how to complain and will also be included in any articles giving feedback on broader consultations, for example the TSM responses.</p>
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Section 2: Exclusions


Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits.		Housing Complaints Policy	<p>All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure - see para 2.2 below.</p> <p>Each complaint is considered on its individual merits and, if not accepted, the resident will be advised of the reason for this.</p>





2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 		Housing Complaints Policy	<p>Our Housing Complaints Policy sets out the circumstances when a complaint will not be accepted and these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ requests for a service ➤ complaints about the actions of a third party (for example, a noisy neighbour); ➤ matters where there is a separate means of resolution (for example, a Tribunal or appeals route); ➤ matters dealt with under the Council's Employment Procedures; ➤ insurance claims against the Council; ➤ requests for information; ➤ corporate complaints (complaints about any other Council service – these are dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure); ➤ complaints that have already been investigated under this or another of the Council's complaints procedures;



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ complaints that have been investigated by the Housing or Local Government Ombudsman; ➤ complaints made twelve months after the date the resident learned that something went wrong (unless there are exceptional circumstances why the complaint has not been made sooner); ➤ complaints relating to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Requests; ➤ complaints about Councillors; ➤ complaints outside of the Council's jurisdiction (for example, complaints about utilities companies); ➤ complaints subject to legal proceedings; ➤ complaints about the level of rent or service charge or the amount of the rent or service charge increase; or ➤ complaints from contractors about their commercial or contractual relationships with the Council.
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside		Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy has been revised to confirm that we now accept complaints referred to us within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of this. This time limit was previously six months. It also confirm that we have the discretion to accept complaints outside of this

	<p>this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.</p>			<p>timeframe where there are good reasons for doing to.</p>
2.4	<p>If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.</p>		<p>Housing Complaints Policy</p>	<p>All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure (see para 2.2).</p> <p>In these circumstances, an explanation will be provide to the resident setting out why the matter is not being accepted as a complaint.</p> <p>The resident will also be informed of the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman and provided with their contact details.</p>
2.5	<p>Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.</p>		<p>Housing Complaints Policy</p>	<p>All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure - see para 2.2 above.</p> <p>Each complaint is considered on its individual merits and, if not accepted the resident will be advised of the reason for this.</p> <p>There is not a blanket approach taken to excluding complaints.</p>


Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness



Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.		<p>Housing Complaints Policy Website Tending Reports Reasonable Adjustments Policy</p>	<p>Our Policy sets out the various ways that a complaint can be made to us and these include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ by filling in our Complaints form, which is available on our website and on request from any member of staff; ➤ by raising it with any member of our staff ➤ by emailing councilhousingcomplaints@tendingdc.gov.uk ➤ by phoning 01255 686868 or the direct number of the team you have been dealing with; or ➤ by visiting our Reception at Pier Avenue in Clacton, which is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 1pm <p>We will regularly publish details about our complaints handling process and also publish information regarding the advice and support that can be provided by the Housing Ombudsman.</p> <p>A separate Reasonable Adjustments Policy has been developed which specifically includes a section on complaint handling.</p>

3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.		Training delivered by EELGA Emails to staff Staff newsletter articles	All staff have been and continue to be made aware of the complaints procedure This is included in the training delivered to all new staff and included in team members one to ones.
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.		Quarterly quantitative reports to Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures	High volumes of complaints will not be seen as a negative. The volume of complaints received has increased significantly since the introduction of our Housing Complaints Policy and the adoption of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint definition. The volume of complaints received will be reviewed following the publication of the TSM data
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.		Housing Complaints Policy Website Tending Reports	The Complaints Procedure is published on the Council's website and this details the two stage process and timescales. Hard copies of this Policy are available on request and information is included in our tenant's newsletter, Tending Reports.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise		Housing Complaints Policy Website	We will regularly publish details about our complaints handling process and policy. We also publish information



	details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.			regarding the advice and support that can be provided by the Housing Ombudsman. Our Policy is published on our website.
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.		Housing Complaints Policy	This is included in the Policy together with details of organisations who may be able to provide assistance, such as Citizens Advice Bureau.
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.		Housing Complaints Policy Website Tending Reports Posters	Each complaint acknowledgement and response advises that support and advice can be obtained from the Housing Ombudsman letters and provides contact details. The Ombudsman service is also publicised via posters in the Council's offices, via its website and tenants newsletters.





Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff



Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.		Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions	<p>The Head of Democratic Services and Elections is the Council's Corporate Complaints Officer and has overall responsibility for the Corporate Complaints and for being the point of liaison with both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman service and the Housing Ombudsman. The Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery) is responsible for the effective operation of the complaints procedure within their area of responsibility. Following the revision of the Housing Ombudsman's Code in 2022, a stand- alone Housing Complaints Policy was introduced and the Senior Housing Manager is responsible for ensuring that complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>Complaints are received and logged by the Business Support Officer and are then allocated to officers as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 complaints – the complaint is allocated to the relevant service Manager. • Stage 2 complaints – the complaint is allocated to the Assistant Director responsible for the function that is the subject of the complaint. The complaint will not be investigated by the same person who investigated the Stage 1 complaint.



				Reminders are sent in relation to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints to ensure resolution within to stated timeframes
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.		Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions	The officer responsible for recording complaints has access to staff at all levels. However, the resolution of complaints and response rests with service managers and / or the relevant Assistant Director.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively		Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions Emails / training for staff	We ensure that all relevant staff are aware of this policy and have the skills and knowledge to implement it and its associated procedures. Key messages regarding the prioritisation of complaint handling are disseminated to staff via team meetings and individual meetings.






Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.		Housing Complaints Policy	A Housing Complaints Policy is in place and residents are not treated differently if they complain
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such		Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy states that the Council will try to resolve complaints informally wherever possible. Circumstances may warrant an informal complaint to proceed to Stage 1 of

	as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.			the formal complaints process. Where a review of a Stage 1 decision is requested, reconsideration of the decision is carried out at Stage 2 of the complaints process. The Complaints Procedure states that the complaint must be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by the Council.
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.		Housing Complaints Policy	The Housing Complaints Policy comprises of only two stages.
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.		Housing Complaints Policy Standard practice	In the majority of cases, our complaint response – even if relating to a contractor – will be handled by the Council. Residents would not be expected to go via two separate complaints processes.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.		Housing Complaints Policy Standard practice	See above comment in 5.4
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.		Housing Complaints Policy Standard practice	The acknowledgement sent at stages 1 and 2 sets out the Council's understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking – also known as the complaint definition.

				If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident will be asked for clarification by the investigating officer.
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.		Housing Complaints Policy Response letters sent	If any aspects of the complaint do not fall within the landlord responsibility, this will be clearly set out in the acknowledgement response sent and the complainant will be advised who this element of their complaint this matter should be referred to.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 		Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy includes the following complaint handling principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct the investigation in an impartial manner ➤ Deal with the complaint on its individual merits ➤ Aim to resolve complaints at the earliest stage possible ➤ Act independently and have an open mind ➤ Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest ➤ Consider all information and evidence carefully ➤ Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter ➤ Give the complainant and anyone who is subject to a complaint a fair chance to set out their position ➤ Not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep the complainant updated about the progress of the investigation ➤ Send a response when the answer to the complaint is known and not when outstanding actions to address the issue are completed. ➤ Advise the complainant of their right to seek advice from the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout the complaints process ➤ Advise the complainant of their right to escalate a complaint and not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint ➤ Keep a record of all complaints and the outcomes at each stage
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.		Housing Complaints Policy Email reminders to staff	All investigating officers are aware of the requirement to agree any time extensions required with the complainant and to provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.		Housing Complaints Policy Reasonable Adjustments Policy	A separate Reasonable Adjustments Policy has been developed and this confirms that a record will be kept of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Reasonable adjustments will be kept under active review.






5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.		Housing Complaints Policy	The Council will not refuse to escalate any compliant unless it has valid reasons to do so.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.		Housing Complaints Policy Housing complaints database and supporting folders	All records relating to individual complaints are retained, in line with the Council's Retention Policy. This includes the original complaint, all subsequent correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any relevant supporting documentation.
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.		Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy aims to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage possible using available remedies, as appropriate.
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.		Housing Complaints Policy Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy	A separate Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy has been developed and implemented. This sets out what is defined as unacceptable behaviour and the action the Council can take in response to this, as well as the review mechanisms in place.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be		Housing Complaints Policy Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy	This has been taken into account in the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour policy.



	proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.			
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Section 6: Complaints Stages


Stage 1




Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint records	Our Housing Complaints Policy aims to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage possible using available remedies, as appropriate. Most complaints are able to be resolved at Stage 1. A separate Vulnerability Policy has also been developed.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints database and records Vulnerability Policy	Complaints are logged and acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received. A complaints database records the complaints received, together with a summary of the complaint and applicable timescales. The acknowledgement will identify who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and the target date for response. The acknowledgement will also set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the resident is expecting.






6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	Our Housing Complaints Policy has been amended to reflect this change in response times.
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	The investigating officer will be responsible for deciding whether an extension to the applicable timescale for response is required and for informing the complainant. Any extension will not exceed 10 working days unless there is a good reason for this and the reason(s) is clearly explained to the resident.
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.		Housing Complaints Policy Individual complaint responses	This information is included in the correspondence informing the resident of the deadline extension. This information is also included in the acknowledgement of the complaint.
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints records	The complaint response letter is sent as soon as the answer to the complaint is known. The Investigating Officer or someone nominated on their behalf is responsible for ensuring that outstanding actions are tracked and that updates are provided to the complainant
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints records	The Investigating Officer is responsible for ensuring that all points raised in the complaint definition are addressed and for providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.



6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	This information is included in the Policy to ensure that complainants know how additional issues raised will be dealt with. This will also be confirmed in correspondence to the complainant.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints correspondence	The specified requirements for Stage 1 responses are confirmed in the Policy.

Stage 2


Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Policy states that, if a complainant is unhappy with the initial response received to their complaint, they should contact us and ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage Two.


	procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.			<p>They do not have to explain or give a reason for requesting that a complaint is escalated to Stage 2.</p> <p>We will only refuse to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 if we have a valid reason for doing so and, if this is the case, we will always provide an explanation.</p>
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	Complaints are logged and acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received. A complaints database records the complaints received, together with a summary of the complaint and applicable timescales. The acknowledgement will identify who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and the target date for response. The acknowledgement will also set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the resident is expecting.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Policy states that, if a complainant is unhappy with the initial response received to their complaint, they should contact us and ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage Two. They do not have to explain or give a reason for requesting that a complaint is escalated to Stage 2.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by an Assistant Director responsible for the service in question or their nominated representative. Stage 2 complaints will not be investigated by



				the same person that considered the complaint at Stage 1.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Housing Complaints Policy has been amended to reflect this change in response times
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	The investigating officer will be responsible for deciding whether an extension to the applicable timescale for response is required and for informing the complainant. Any extension will not exceed 20 working days unless there is a good reason for this and the reason(s) is clearly explained to the resident
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	This information is included in the correspondence informing the resident of the deadline extension. This information is also included in the acknowledgement of the complaint.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		Housing Complaint Policy Complaints correspondence	The complaint response letter is sent as soon as the answer to the complaint is known. The Investigating Officer or someone nominated on their behalf is responsible for ensuring that outstanding actions are tracked and that updates are provided to the complainant
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		Housing Complaint Policy Complaint correspondence	The Investigating Officer is responsible for ensuring that all points raised in the complaint definition are addressed and for providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	The specified requirements for Stage 2 responses are confirmed in the Policy.
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.		Housing Complaint Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Housing Complaints Policy is a two stage process.

Section 7: Putting things right



Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Policy includes a section on Putting things right and this states: Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken or intend to take to put things right. These can include:




	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acknowledging where things have gone wrong ➤ Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons ➤ Taking action if there has been a delay ➤ Reconsidering or changing a decision ➤ Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum ➤ Providing a financial remedy ➤ Changing policies, procedures or practice. <p>Complaints can be resolved at any stage of our complaints policy.</p> <p>If we uphold your complaint you can expect an apology and for us to put things right quickly. We may also propose one or more of the above actions. The aim of these actions is to put you back in the position you were in before the problem occurred and make amends for any loss you may have suffered as a result. Although we will consider each complaint on its merits we will try to ensure we offer similar remedies for similar situations.</p> <p>Remedies may include a review of our practices and procedures to ensure that the same thing does not happen again, or we may take a specific action.</p>
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints handling practice	In considering appropriate remedies, the Investigating Officer will consider

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outcome does the complainant want to achieve by complaining? What has gone wrong? • Can action be taken to put the person affected back in the position they would have been in if nothing had gone wrong? • Is there an actual quantifiable financial loss, such as costs incurred or payments not received? • How severe was any other impact in terms of distress, harm or risk? • Overall, is the remedy proportionate, appropriate and reasonable?
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	The complaint response letter will clearly set out any remedial actions and the timescales for these. The Investigating officer will then be responsible for ensuring that the proposed remedy is followed through to completion. A record of the remedy will be recorded on the complaints database.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.		Complaint handling practice	This guidance is taken into account when deciding on remedies.


Section 8: Putting things right





Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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8.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: 2. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. 3. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; 4. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; 5. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; 6. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and 7. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 		<p>Housing Complaints Policy Cabinet report Complaints self-assessment Complaint performance report</p>	<p>A self-assessment will be carried out April each year to ensure that our complaints handling policy remains in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complain Handling Code</p> <p>An annual report will also be prepared and presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June covering these requirements to ensure transparency and enable scrutiny and challenge</p>
8.2	<p>The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing</p>		<p>Housing Complaints Policy Cabinet report Complaints self-assessment Complaint performance report</p>	<p>This report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June each year and will be published on the Council's website, together with any comments made by Cabinet.</p>

	body's response to the report must be published alongside this.			
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.		Housing Complaints Policy Complaints self-assessment	A self-assessment will be carried out following any significant restructure, merger and / or change in procedures
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.		Ombudsman investigation Complaints self-assessment	If required to do so, this will be carried out.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website. Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.		Housing Complaints Policy	This is included in our Complaints Policy and will be actioned, if and when applicable.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.		Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report Service meetings	From 1 April 2024, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing will receive quarterly updates on complaint performance including whether any service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints. This will also be included in the annual complaint report presented to the Council's Cabinet. Complaint handling will also be included as a standard agenda item on the regular meetings that the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has with housing managers, commencing in April 2024

9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.		Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report Service meetings	From 1 April 2024, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing will receive quarterly updates on complaint performance including whether any service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints. Complaint handling will also be included as a standard agenda item on the regular meetings that the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has with housing managers, commencing in April 2024
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.		Website Trending Reports Tenant Panel meeting minutes	Updates on the Council's performance in handling housing complaints will be included on the Council's website and in its tenant newsletters. Regular items will also be included on the agenda for the Tenants Panel.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.		Complaint performance reports Service meetings	This role has been allocated to the Senior Housing Manager who will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision.
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').		Housing Complaints Policy Service meetings	The Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) and has lead responsibility to support a positive complaint handling culture. The MRC will receive quarterly quantitative and quantitative reports and will discuss issues relating to complaints performance at monthly meetings with housing managers.

9.6	<p>The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.</p>		<p>Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report Service meetings</p>	<p>An annual report will be presented will be presented by the MRC to the Council's Cabinet to provide insight on our complaint handling performance</p>
9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 		<p>Housing Complaints Policy Annual complaint performance report</p>	<p>An annual report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June covering these requirements to ensure transparency and enable scrutiny and challenge</p>
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and 		<p>Housing Complaints Policy</p>	<p>These objectives are included in our Housing Complaints Policy and reinforced to staff via various methods of internal communications.</p>

	c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.			
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