

Complaint Handling Code Consultation Response

Published February 2024

Contents

Foreword from The Housing Ombudsman	3
1. Executive Summary	5
2. Consultation approach	6
3. Summary of responses	7
i. Increasing awareness and access to landlords' complaints processes	7
ii. Extending fairness through consistent complaint handling across the sector.	10
iii. Improving transparency and accountability over complaint handling policy and practice; demonstrating continuous learning and improvement	13
4. The new duty to monitor landlords' compliance with the Code.....	16
5. A final word... ..	19
Appendix A: Consultation responders	20
Appendix B: Complaint Handling Code changes – easy reference guide	26

Foreword from The Housing Ombudsman

The heartbeat of this Code is enabling a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector.

This positive culture matters regardless of size or type of landlord. It supports strong resident-landlord relationships. It means things can be put right for residents when they have gone wrong. It helps organisations to develop and improve services. And, perhaps above all, it supports the values of justice and fairness that embodies so much of the sector's social purpose.



This is the fourth year the Code has been in existence, but the first it will be statutory. Despite this familiarity, we are delighted with the strong response to the consultation and support for its aims and objectives.

We received 613 responses, including nine from professional or member bodies; around half – 360 responses - came from residents.

We are hugely grateful to everyone for the time and thought given to responses.

The support for measures in the Code were clear and wide across landlords and residents; 74% supported the changes to improve access and remove barriers to the complaints procedure and 76% supported the changes to accountability and transparency and a similar proportion supported our proposals to monitor compliance with the Code. There was particularly high agreement from landlords, which shows how the sector is embracing greater rigour around complaints despite challenging operational environments.

We have listened to the feedback during the consultation. This includes around assuring the self-assessment and built this into our Code Compliance Framework and requests for more guidance which we deliver through our new, CPD-accredited Centre for Learning.

This Code considers complaints to be more than transactions. Nonetheless, good complaint handling requires effective procedures and well-trained staff alongside a positive complaints culture that enables those procedures to achieve maximum impact. This Code sets out what landlords must do procedurally to handle complaints. Compliance with the Code is most effective within landlords that operate within established dispute resolution principles: to be fair, puts things right, and learn from outcomes.

Landlords must embrace complaints through increased transparency, accessibility, and complaint handling governance, demonstrating that residents are core to its service delivery and good complaint handling is central to that.

This Code aims to support the earliest resolution of complaints while the matters are still within the landlord's own procedure. This can avoid issues escalating with potentially prolonged detriment to the resident, as well as requiring significantly more time and resource by the landlord to remedy.

The Code provides a guide to residents of what to expect if they make a complaint, as well as improving access and awareness to the procedure when they need it. The adoption of this statutory Code and associated duties ensures residents do not experience a postcode lottery in complaint handling.

Embracing the Code can also empower staff. Involvement in complaint resolution develops staff ownership, decision-making and engagement, and should ensure appropriate resources and tools are deployed to handle complaints. It provides senior staff with essential insight into day-to-day operations, allowing them to assess effectiveness and identify any organisational risks or issues. Lastly, data collected about complaints can be analysed and used to inform key business decisions to drive improvement in service provision.

Landlords are expected to annually self-assess against the Code, to engage its governance in that exercise and to publish the outcome. We also encourage landlords to see this exercise as an opportunity to engage residents in setting their approach to complaints to drive a positive complaints and learning culture. This approach must be captured by the landlord in a single policy for handling complaints.

The positive engagement of landlords in the Code and its principles has brought focus on the importance of complaints and the advent of this statutory Code will drive further change to the benefit of both residents and landlords.

Richard Blakeway

Housing Ombudsman

1. Executive Summary

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the Scheme should have in place for considering complaints. It also placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with a code of practice that it has issued.

The Ombudsman consulted member landlords, residents and the Regulator of Social Housing on our Complaint Handling Code (the Code) and our intended approach to the duty to monitor between 29 September and 24 November 2023. We received 604 responses; 361 from residents and 243 from landlords. We also received a further 9 from key sector bodies and the Regulator of Social Housing.

Although originally consulted on as a joint code with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), the two organisations have decided to issue separate Codes following analysis of consultation feedback. Each Code is based on a unified set of principles and share many of the same approaches in key areas such as response times, timeliness and oversight. But by issuing separate Codes we are able to recognise the differences between our roles and powers in relation to the different approaches individual council services may need to take when responding to complaints.

Responses to our consultation questions on the Code were positive, demonstrating continued support for the Code and recognition of the benefits that it has delivered to date. The comments shared also supported our aims, and gave additional feedback about how we could further strengthen our approach. As a result of consultation feedback, we have strengthened and clarified some aspects of the Code.

Responses to our consultation questions on our approach to the duty to monitor were similarly strongly positive and agreed that it was transparent, proportionate and fair.

Alongside this consultation response, we are publishing the final Complaint Handling Code, the Duty to Monitor Framework, FAQs, updated Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) guidance and the consultation equality impact assessment. Further guidance will continue to be published over the coming months and learning tools will continue to be added to our Centre for Learning, accessible via our website. For more information please visit the website.

The statutory Code will take effect from 1 April 2024 and our duty to monitor compliance will commence at the same time.

2. Consultation approach

The aims of the consultation were to seek views about:

- Whether Code provisions were sufficient in key areas of complaint handling and enabling a positive complaint handling culture, and if respondents had any further suggestions to strengthen these;
- Whether the proposed complaints performance and service improvement report provided a sufficient oversight framework for governing bodies and baseline for the Ombudsman to monitor compliance;
- Our plans to align submissions with Tenant Satisfaction Measure returns and prioritise assessments if volumes received exceed our capacity to assess compliance; and
- Any other relevant comments respondents might want us to consider.

Residents and their representative bodies were invited to participate online via our website, telephone, email or in writing. We also invited our Resident Panel to take part following workshops held in September. We wrote to all member landlords and their representative bodies to invite them to participate in the consultation via an online form or by email. As a statutory consultee, the Regulator of Social Housing was also invited to comment.

To promote awareness and participation, we set up a dedicated consultation webpage with links to the Complaint Handling Code and other key documents. We also issued a consultation specific newsletter to all of our subscribers. In addition, we attended six externally hosted events to promote the consultation to residents and landlords. In total, we spoke to 1,235 individuals from landlords and resident backgrounds.

A full list of all non-resident respondents is included at Annex A.

In total, we received 617 responses and over 1,400 comments. The breakdown is as follows: 361 from social housing residents; 245 from landlords and 11 from representative bodies. For further information on the breakdown of respondents, please see the accompanying [Equality Impact Assessment](#).

3. Summary of responses

We have carefully considered all consultation responses and comments to finalise our Complaint Handling Code and the Duty to Monitor Framework. Details are set out below against the consultation questions. We will also use the feedback to inform the development of future learning tools for landlords and residents, available on our website and via our Centre for Learning.

A full table of all changes from the consulted version of the Code to the final, statutory version can be found in the annex of this document.

i. Increasing awareness and access to landlords' complaints processes

The sections of the Code covered by this consultation question are:

- Section 1 – definition of a complaint
- Section 2 – exclusions
- Section 3 – accessibility and awareness

Specific provisions drawn to consultees attention in comparison to the extant Code covered the following:

- a. Made clear landlords must not stop their efforts to resolve a service request because a related complaint has been raised.
- b. Extended the time a resident has for bringing a complaint from 6 months to 12 months.
- c. Made clear landlords must not exclude complaints about safeguarding or health and safety issues.
- d. Made clear landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints.
- e. Raised awareness of the need to comply with the Equality Act.

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Are the provisions in the Code sufficient to increase awareness and improve access to landlords' complaints processes?	66%	90%	74%

We received 222 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from residents.

[Proposal a – to make clear landlords must not stop their efforts to resolve a service request because a related complaint has been raised](#)

This proposal was supported by the majority of respondents and so we are proceeding with it. It received strong support from residents who highlighted the

importance of prompt action where the issues they are reporting are directly impacting on them or their home.

Comments from landlords and residents highlighted service requests as an area where additional guidance would be beneficial. To address this, we have reverted to the wording from the 2022 Code as this is fuller, and we have inserted our flowchart that demonstrates when something is a service request/recovery and when it is a complaint.

Proposal b: to extend the time a resident has for bringing a complaint from 6 months to 12 months

Removing barriers to making and progressing complaints was a key theme from residents in consultation responses. Extending the timescale for accepting a complaint allows for long-term and often entrenched issues to be considered in full.

Some landlords did raise the potential impact this may have on complaint volumes and, therefore, resourcing. On balance, we have decided to proceed with this proposal in the Code to remove barriers to raising complaints. We have also clarified that complaints made within 12 months may be excluded on other grounds.

Proposal c – to make clear landlords must not exclude complaints about safeguarding or health and safety issues

Feedback from respondents indicates that this approach is already established across member landlords. Some landlords also highlighted that there are other established protocols for specific circumstances, such as safeguarding referrals and that this provision could lead to a delay in contacting the correct agencies. Consequently, we have not proceeded with this proposed provision in the Code.

Proposal d – to make clear landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints

No direct concerns were raised by respondents about this proposal so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

Many respondents requested further details on exclusions so we have incorporated this into the exclusions section of the Frequently Asked Questions we have published on our website. We have also re-introduced the list of acceptable exclusions from the 2022 Code and added that any circumstances in which an exclusion is applied must be fair and reasonable to provide further clarity.

Proposal e - to raise awareness of the need to comply with the Equality Act

No material concerns were raised by respondents relating to this question so we have proceeded with this proposal.

Residents highlighted that they felt landlords were focusing on enhancing their digital communication channels which could impact on those less able to communicate in writing and/or online. A number of landlords asked for more support in this area.

This area is a key focus for the Ombudsman; our Spotlight reports on [Attitudes, Respect and Rights](#), and [Knowledge and Information Management](#) contain recommendations to improve landlord services in this regard. We will continue to provide learning tools for landlords on our Centre for Learning in these areas.

[Additional amendments made in response to comments](#)

Resident respondents gave a clear signal that they wanted a choice as to whether their dissatisfaction was registered as a complaint. Consequently, we have amended the Code to state landlords must give residents a choice when dissatisfaction is expressed to make a complaint.

Similarly, we clarified that survey responses expressing dissatisfaction are not automatically defined as a complaint but that residents must be given the option to raise a complaint if they choose to. This also allows choice but also more clearly aligns with the definition set out by the Regulator of Social Housing in their Tenant Satisfaction Measure CH01.

We have also removed the specific reference to complaints made via social media - not all member landlords have a social media presence and residents may choose to talk about services on social media without wanting to raise a complaint, or be contacted by their landlord.

ii. Extending fairness through consistent complaint handling across the sector

The sections of the Code covered by this consultation question are:

- Section 4 – complaint handling staff
- Section 5 – complaint handling process
- Section 6 – complaints stages
- Section 7 – putting things right

Specific provisions drawn to consultees attention in comparison to the 2022 Code covered the following:

- Reduced prescription about the attributes of complaint handling staff.
- Confirmed ‘informal’ complaint handling stages are not appropriate.
- Clarified communication with residents should not identify individual staff members or contractors connected with the complaint.
- Clarified that a complaint should only either be upheld or not upheld.
- Clarified that residents do not need to explain their reasons for requesting an escalation to Stage 2.
- Established an extension to Stage 2 should not be more than 20 working days without good reason.
- Confirmed landlords should only have two stages to their complaint handling process.
- Simplified the content on remedies for fair redress.

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Are the provisions in the Code sufficient to extend fairness through consistent complaint handling?	64%	66%	65%

We received 254 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from landlords.

Proposal f - to reduce prescription about the attributes of complaint handling staff

These proposals were supported by respondents and so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

We have made an amendment to this section in response to landlord comments on question 1b on extending timescales for acceptance of a complaint from 6 to 12 months. This clarifies that complaints should be as a core service and must be resourced to handle these effectively.

Proposal g – ‘informal’ complaint handling stages are not appropriate

Many residents who responded shared their experiences of delays to complaints being raised. Some went on to say that this left them feeling 'unheard' and 'ignored'.

A small number of landlords expressed concerns about the potential impact that this could have on resourcing of front-line and complaint handling teams. Some went on to tell us that there are times that residents value access to informal approaches and that residents should be given a choice on how their concerns are resolved. We have addressed this concern in our response to additional comments made in section 1.

It is not fair or reasonable to prevent or delay residents from making a complaint if they so choose so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

[Proposal h - to clarify communication with residents should not identify individual staff members or contractors connected with the complaint.](#)

Both landlords and residents highlighted that this would make responses confusing for residents, and could reduce openness and transparency between landlords and their residents.

We have not proceeded with this provision in the Code.

[Proposal i - to clarify that a complaint should only either be upheld or not upheld](#)

Respondents highlighted that this risked inconsistent complaint handling performance information. We intend to use our Code compliance monitoring work to explore landlords' outcome recording and share good examples through our Centre for Learning.

We have not proceeded with this provision in the Code.

[Proposal j - to clarify that residents do not need to explain their reasons for requesting an escalation to Stage 2.](#)

This provision removes a potential barrier for residents to progressing their complaint if they are unable to meet specific requirements set by landlords. Respondents' comments about barriers often noted that this was particularly challenging for residents with communication needs or disabilities.

Feedback from a small number of landlords and residents noted that this may lead to less meaningful responses at the final stage.

We have proceeded with this proposal in the Code. To recognise the concerns about the meaningfulness of responses, we have amended the Code to require that landlords must set out the complaint definition, and seek clarification if any aspects are unclear, within 5 working days of a Stage 2 escalation request.

[Proposal k - to establish an extension to Stage 2 should not be more than 20 working days without good reason.](#)

We have proceeded with this proposal in the Code as clarity over timescales were a key theme from both residents and landlords across the whole of the complaint handling process.

To ensure expectations at Stage 2 are clear, we have clarified that the timescales for responding to Stage 2 apply from acknowledgement of the complaint.

Proposal l - to confirm landlords should only have two stages to their complaint handling process

Although a small number of landlords and residents considered that additional stages can bring benefits, residents often responded that timescales are already longer than they would like and that landlords frequently miss these.

Many landlords highlighted the challenges they are facing to sufficiently resource their services.

Given that any additional stages will increase the overall time for a resident to receive their final response and further stages would increase resource demands, we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

Proposal m - to simplify the content on remedies for fair redress

Landlords and residents frequently requested further guidance about remedies, particularly around how any financial redress may be calculated and paid to residents.

We have proceeded with this proposal in the Code and further details on remedies are available [via our website](#).

Additional amendments made in response to comments

A strong theme from respondents was that the Code should contain clear expectations at each stage of the landlords' internal complaint handling process. We have addressed the most significant of these through some of the changes above. In addition, we have made some small amendments to move expectations that are common across Stage 1 and Stage 2 into section 5 on the complaint handling process.

Amendments to the role of a senior executive officer in section 9 (scrutiny and oversight) which make clear that this person is responsible for complaint handling performance have resulted in the removal of this responsibility from the complaints officer.

iii. **Improving transparency and accountability over complaint handling policy and practice; demonstrating continuous learning and improvement**

The sections of the Code covered by this consultation question are:

- Section 8 – self-assessment, reporting and compliance
- Section 9 – scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Specific provisions drawn to consultees attention in comparison to the 2022 Code covered the following:

- n. Confirmed that governing bodies receive the self-assessment and that this is published.
- o. Confirmed the appointment from the governing body of a Member Responsible for Complaints.
- p. Supported a regular information report to the governing body on complaints.
- q. Clarified the requirement for a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for relevant staff.
- r. Clarified the complaint handling and service improvement report will form part of the self-assessment process.

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Do the provisions in the Code increase landlords' transparency and accountability to the residents?	67%	90%	76%

We received 218 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from residents.

Proposal n – to confirm that governing bodies receive the self-assessment and that this is published.

Residents and landlords supported the aims of the self-assessment; the majority of landlord comments requested further guidance on completing this effectively. We have provided additional guidance on the completion of the self-assessment and complaint handling reporting in our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and will publish further guidance through [our Centre for Learning](#) in due course.

We have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

Proposal o – to confirm the appointment from the governing body of a Member Responsible for Complaints.

No material comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

We have made a minor amendment to clarify that the person appointed to take accountability for complaints within the organisation must be a 'suitably senior person' rather than a 'suitably senior executive'. This is in response to feedback that landlords vary in size, type and structure across our membership.

Proposal p – to support a regular information report to the governing body on complaints.

No material comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

In response to landlords' request for more information about what should be reported to governing bodies, we have added further requirements that governing bodies must receive regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and on reaching compliance with severe maladministration orders. Landlords can also refer to our [Member Responsible for Complaints toolkit](#).

Proposal q – to clarify the requirement for a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for relevant staff.

No material comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

Proposal r – to clarify the complaint handling and service improvement report will form part of the self-assessment process.

No material comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in the Code.

Landlords requested further guidance should be included in their annual complaint handling and service improvement report. We intend to use our compliance monitoring work to identify good examples or reporting and share these through our [Centre for Learning](#).

This section of the consultation also asked:

Proposal s – do the provisions of the Code help embed a positive complaint handling culture.

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Do the provisions of the Code help to embed a positive complaint handling culture?	78%	66%	71%

We received 187 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from residents.

Residents who gave comments in response to this question, raised concerns about the ability of the self-assessment to drive change in landlords' complaint handling cultures.

Some raised negative experiences of complaints with their landlord, ranging from a lack of empathy and understanding to reports of a 'toxic' complaint handling culture. Through our duty to monitor compliance with the Code, the Ombudsman will confirm that landlords have complied with the requirements on scrutiny and oversight, complaint handling policy and complaint handling practice.

Landlords expressed support of the Code and the principles underpinning its proposals. Many landlords went on to highlight that a positive complaint handling culture goes beyond the Code itself, and several shared examples of embedding this approach across all service areas. Where our compliance monitoring activity finds good practice, we will share this via the Centre for Learning.

A small number of landlords were concerned that the timescales could lead to poorer quality complaint responses. While the intentions of the Code are to drive prompt complaint responses, there are provisions which allow landlords to take longer where there is good reason.

4. The new duty to monitor landlords' compliance with the Code

- i. Does the annual complaints performance and service improvement report provide a sufficient framework for landlords' governing bodies, residents and other stakeholders to have oversight of complaint handling policy, practice and learning?

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Does the annual complaint performance and service improvement report provide a sufficient framework for landlords' governing bodies, residents and other stakeholders to have oversight of complaints handling policy, practice and learning?	66%	87%	74%

We received 201 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from residents.

While residents supported the reporting framework, they raised the importance of accurate and representative information and the benefits of more frequent reporting than annually.

Our work to ensure compliance in practice will triangulate landlord data with our own information, data and insights, and information from external sources. Where we perceive anomalies, we will investigate further. Where we see landlords reporting more frequently, we will share good examples of this via [our Centre for Learning](#).

Landlord comments requested further information about what would be required when submitting the annual complaint handling and service improvement report, including the self-assessment. Comments also highlighted the importance of proportionality and flexibility here to reflect landlord size and resident needs.

We do not intend to be prescriptive about the contents of the annual complaint performance and service improvement report beyond what is contained in the Code; landlords must meet the assurance needs of their governing body in the most effective and appropriate way. As we undertake compliance work, we will share good examples of reporting via our Centre for Learning.

ii. Are our plans to align submissions with Tenant Satisfaction Measure returns an effective approach?

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Are our plans to align submissions with Tenant Satisfaction Measure returns an effective approach?	75%	86%	80%

We received 163 comments in response to this question. We received similar numbers of comments from residents and landlords.

No specific comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in our Code Compliance Framework.

iii. Do our plans to use the complaint performance and service improvement report provide a suitable baseline for HOS to monitor compliance across the sector?

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Do our plans to use the complaint performance and service improvement report provide a suitable baseline for HOS to monitor compliance across the sector?	77%	86%	80%

We received 108 comments in response to this question. We received similar numbers of comments from residents and landlords.

Residents strongly supported this approach. They also emphasised that the Ombudsman should challenge landlords' self-assessments to ensure that they are not 'marking their own homework'. Residents also wanted to share their views with the Ombudsman as part of our compliance work, and to be informed of the outcome through regular reporting.

Our framework sets out our approach to ensuring compliance in practice and in policy. We will triangulate self-assessments with other information we hold and examine complaint handling policies in more detail, where necessary. When ensuring compliance in practice, we will visit landlords where necessary and, as part of that, invite residents to share their experiences with us directly – either through an in-person meeting or a call for evidence hosted on our website.

Where we find non-compliance in any area, we will issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order. We will publish a quarterly, summary report which sets out all that have been issued in that period.

iv. Is our proposed prioritisation of Code compliance assessments, in the event of demand exceeding capacity, fair and reasonable?

Consultation question	Residents	Landlords	All responses
Is our proposed prioritisation of Code compliance assessments, in the event of demand exceeding capacity, fair and reasonable?	76%	92%	82%

We received 114 comments in response to this question, over half of which were from residents.

No material comments were raised in relation to this section and so we have proceeded with this proposal in our Code Compliance Framework.

5. A final word...

The final consultation question asked respondents to provide any other relevant comments. Having reviewed the responses here, nothing material was raised that has not been captured in responding to the questions above.

Appendix A: Consultation responders

A huge thank you to all the landlords that responded to our consultation.

Abbeyfield the Dales	Housing Association
Abri Group	Housing Association
Adur & Worthing Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Anchor	Housing Association
Arches Housing	Housing Association
Arun District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Ashfield District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Basildon Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Bassetlaw District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Believe Housing	Housing Association
Berneslai Hones	Housing Association
Bernicia	Housing Association
Birmingham City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Black Country Housing Group	Housing Association
Bolsover District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
bpha	Housing Association
Brandon Poors Estate	Almshouse
Brent Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Brighton & Hove City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Bristol City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Broadland Housing Association	Housing Association
Bromford Housing Group	Housing Association
Bromley & Croydon WA (BCWA)	Voluntary
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Housing Association
Broxtowe Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Cambridge City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Camden Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Cannock Chase Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Castles & Coasts Housing Association	Housing Association
CESSA HOUSING ASSOCIATION	Housing Association
Peaks & Plains Housing Trust	Housing Association
CHP	Housing Association
Church of England Soldiers Sailors and Airmen's Housing Association Ltd	Housing Association
Citizen Housing Ltd	Housing Association
City of Doncaster Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
City of Lincoln Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
City of Wolverhampton Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
City of York Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Clarion housing	Housing Association

Clarion Housing Group	Housing Association
Claverdon Benefice Housing Association	Housing Association
Coastline Housing Limited	Housing Association
Colchester Borough Homes	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Colonel Slater Homes	Almshouse
Community Gateway Association	Housing Association
Community Housing	Housing Association
Connexus Homes Limited	Housing Association
Cottsway Housing	Housing Association
Crawley Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
CRAWLEY HOMES	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Crosby Housing Association	Housing Association
Cyron Housing Co-operative	Cooperative
Dacorum Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Darlington Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Day's and Atkinson's Almshouse Charity	Almshouse
Derby Homes	Housing Association
Dorchester Almshouses	Almshouse
Durham County Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Durham County Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
East Suffolk Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Eastbourne Homes Ltd	Housing Association
Emh	Housing Association
EPIC HOUSING	Housing Association
Epping Forest District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Est Riding of Yorkshire Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Exeter City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
First Choice Homes Oldham	Housing Association
Firstport	Housing Association
Flagship Group	Housing Association
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
ForHousing	Housing Association
Futures Housing Group	Housing Association
Gateshead Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Gateway Housing Association	Housing Association
Gentoo	Housing Association
Grand Union Housing Group	Housing Association
Gravesend Churches Housing Association	Housing Association
Gravesham Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Great Places Housing Group	Housing Association
Greatwell Homes	Housing Association
GreenSquareAccord	Housing Association
Habinteg Housing Association	Housing Association
Halton Housing	Housing Association
Hammersmith and Fulham Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)

Haringey Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Harlow Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Hastoe Housing Association	Housing Association
Havering Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
High Peak Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Hightown Housing Association	Housing Association
Hilldale Housing Organisation	Housing Association
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Home Group	Housing Association
Hornsey Housing Trust	Housing Association
Housing 21	Housing Association
Housing Plus	Housing Association
Hull City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Hyde	Housing Association
Incommunities	Housing Association
Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association	Housing Association
Jewish Blind & Disabled	Housing Association
Jewish Community Housing Association	Housing Association
Karbon Homes	For profit
L&Q	Housing Association
Lambeth Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Lancaster City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Leeds City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Leeds Jewish Housing Association	Housing Association
Legal & General Affordable Homes	For profit
Lincolnshire Housing Partnership	Housing Association
Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association Limited	Housing Association
LiveWest Homes Limited	Housing Association
London Borough of Enfield	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Hackney	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Harrow	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Hillingdon	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Hounslow	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Islington	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Merton	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough Of Newham	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Borough of Redbridge	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
London Councils	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Look Ahead Care and Support	Housing Association
Magenta Living	Housing Association
Magna Housing	Housing Association
Medway Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH)	Housing Association

MHS Homes Group	Housing Association
Mid Devon District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Midland Heart	Housing Association
Mosscares St Vincents	Housing Association
Mount Green Housing Association	Housing Association
Muir Group Housing Association	Housing Association
New Forest District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Newark and Sherwood District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Newark and Sherwood District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Newlon Housing Trust	Housing Association
NORTH EAST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED	Housing Association
North Kesteven District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
North London Muslim Housing Association	Housing Association
North Northamptonshire Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
North Tyneside Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
North West Leicestershire District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
North Yorkshire Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Northamptonshire Partnership Homes	Housing Association
Norwich City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Notting Hill Genesis	Housing Association
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Oak Grove housing	Housing Association
Ocean Housing Group	Housing Association
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
One Manchester	Housing Association
Onward Homes	Housing Association
Orbit Group	Housing Association
Orwell Housing	Housing Association
Papworth Trust	Housing Association
PCHA	Housing Association
Phoenix Community Housing	Housing Association
Pickering and Ferens Homes	Housing Association
Places for People	Housing Association
Platform Housing Group	Housing Association
Plus Dane Housing	Housing Association
Plymouth Community Homes	Housing Association
Portsmouth City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Prima Group	Housing Association
Progress Housing Group	Housing Association
Raven Housing Trust	Housing Association
Regenda Homes	Housing Association
Richmond and Wandsworth Councils	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Riverside	Housing Association
Rochdale Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Royal Borough of Greenwich	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Runnymede Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Sage Homes	Housing Association
Salix Homes Limited	Housing Association
Sanctuary	Housing Association
settle	Housing Association
Sheffield city council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Shepherds Bush Housing Association	Housing Association
Shropshire Rural Housing Association	Housing Association
Somerset Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
South Holland District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
South Liverpool Homes	Housing Association
South Yorkshire Housing Association	Housing Association
Southern Housing	Housing Association
Southway Housing Trust	Housing Association
Sovini Group	Housing Association
St Albans City & District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
St Arthur Homes	Housing Association
ST MICHAEL HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED	Voluntary
St Mungo's	Housing Association
Stevenage Borough Council	Housing Association
Stoke on Trent City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Stonewater	Housing Association
Storm Housing Group	Housing Association
Stroud District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Tandridge District council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Telford and Wrekin Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
The Cambridge Housing Society Limited	Housing Association
The Guinness Partnership Ltd	Housing Association
The Housing Plus Group	Housing Association
The Pioneer Group	Housing Association
The Riverside Group Ltd.	Housing Association
Thirteen Group	Housing Association
Thrive Homes	Housing Association
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	Housing Association
Trent & Dove Housing Limited	Housing Association
Trident Group	Housing Association
VIVID	Housing Association
Wandle Housing Association	Housing Association
Watford Community Housing	Housing Association
Waverley Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
WDH Wakefield and District Housing	Housing Association

Wealden District Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
weaver vale housing trust	Housing Association
West Kent Housing Association	Housing Association
Westmorland & Furness Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Westway Housing Association Ltd	Housing Association
Wigan Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Wiltshire Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Winchester City Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Wokingham Borough Council	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Worthing Homes Ltd	Local Authority (including ALMO / TMO)
Wrekin Housing Group	Housing Association
Wythenshawe Community Housing Group	Housing Association
YMCA DownsLink Group	Abbeyfield
Yorkshire Housing	Housing Association

Appendix B: Complaint Handling Code changes – easy reference guide

This document sets out the changes made to the Code 2022 through consultation in autumn 2023. For ease of reference, each provision of the Code 2022 has been included, along with the updated provision number and wording (where applicable). We have included our reasons for the change where required.

Note: this easy reference guide does not detail the full Statutory Code, rather it sets out how the Code 2022 has been amended.

Code 2022		Statutory Complaint Handling Code		Commentary
Par.	Wording (previous)	Para	Wording (new)	
1.1	Effective complaint handling enables residents to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a shared understanding of what constitutes a complaint.	1.1	Effective complaint handling enables residents to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a shared understanding of what constitutes a complaint.	Unchanged
1.2	A complaint must be defined 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.	1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <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>	Unchanged
1.3	The resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party	1.3	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	Amended in response to feedback to give choice to residents.

	or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.		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.	
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint should be raised when the resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. For further guidance on how to decide whether the approach is a service request or a complaint, see our flow charts and example case studies in Appendix A.	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.	Updated to two provisions (1.4 and 1.5) for clarity. Updated to clarify that service requests are not necessarily a complaint.
		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.	

1.5	Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.	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 feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Amended in response to feedback to give choice to residents.
1.6	Chasers on a service request, such as a missed appointment, can often be resolved 'there and then' with an apology and the provision of another appointment and may not need to enter the complaints system. However, if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 1.5 above
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	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.	Moved to paragraph 2.1 (exclusion) for clarity. Amended in response to feedback about excluding complaints.

1.8	<p>A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. However, it may not be appropriate to exclude any complaints that concern safeguarding or health and safety issues. • 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. 	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. 	<p>Amended to clarify that complaints policies must set out exclusions.</p> <p>Amended through consultation to confirm that exclusions should not apply to complaints where the issue is less than 12 months old.</p>
		2.3	<p>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 this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.</p>	<p>New provision</p>

1.9	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed 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 instruct the landlord to take on the complaint.	2.4	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.	Minor amendment to working to ensure clarity.
		2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	New provision
2.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints system.	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.	Amended to clarify landlords' obligation to consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments of residents.
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 3.1.

	should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.			
2.3	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding.	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.	Amended for clarity.
2.4	Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website.			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 3.4.
2.5	Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training to deal with such requests.	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.	Amended for clarity.
2.6	Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 3.4.

	Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.			
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	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.	Moved and amended for clarity.
2.8	Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord's complaints process is exhausted. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors for impartial advice.	3.7		
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer". For some organisations, particularly smaller landlords, the Ombudsman recognises that this role may be in addition to other duties. The role is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for liaison with the Housing Ombudsman and appropriate cover exists to ensure consistency of service.	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.	Amended for clarity, and to reflect provisions set out in paragraph 9.4.

3.2	The complaints officer may allocate complaints handling to another person. Where this is the case, the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.		At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:	
3.3	Effective complaint handling skills are one of the most important factors in ensuring that the complaints handling works well. Complaint handlers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to act sensitively and fairly • be trained to handle 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. 	5.8c	<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. 	Moved and amended for clarity.
3.4	Residents are more likely to be satisfied with complaint handling if the person dealing with their complaint is competent, empathetic and efficient.			Removed.
4.1	The Ombudsman encourages the early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents and recognises that there may be times appropriate action can be agreed immediately. Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints	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 as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Amended for clarity

	<p>procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'pre-complaint stage') as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt.</p>			
4.2	<p>Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.</p>	5.6	<p>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.</p>	<p>Amended to confirm that the complaint definition must be clarified at both stages of the complaint process.</p>
4.3	<p>Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.</p>	5.7	<p>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.</p>	<p>Amended for clarity.</p>
4.4	<p>A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident and</p>	5.13	<p>Landlords must have processes in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure that appropriate remedies can</p>	<p>Amended for clarity.</p>

	whether there are any urgent actions required.		be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	
4.5	Landlords should 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 where this is reasonable.		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.	Moved to accessibility and awareness for clarity.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner, seeking sufficient, reliable information from both parties so that fair and appropriate findings and recommendations can be made.	5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:	
4.7	The complaint handler must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits • 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. 	5.8	<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. 	Amended for clarity.
4.8	Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties and seek clarification before doing so where this is not initially clear.			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 5.8.

4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors as their actions are undertaken on behalf of the landlord.			Removed in response to feedback.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation even where there is no new substantive information to provide.	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.	Amended for clarity.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.	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.	Amended for clarity.
4.12	The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	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; 	Amended for clarity

			<p>c) take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</p> <p>d) consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</p>	
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint.	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.	Amended in response to feedback.
4.14	A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a landlord's complaints policy and must be the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint.	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.	Amended for clarity.
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all	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	Amended for clarity

	correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.		correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	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.	Amended for clarity and moved as this relates to continuous learning and improvement.
4.17	Landlords should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and engaged in the complaints process, including the learning that can be gained.			
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	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.	Amended for clarity, and to confirm that landlords must make evidence-based decisions that are regularly reviewed.
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and	5.10	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard	Amended for clarity.

	should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.		for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Amended in response to feedback. This confirms the 10 days is from the date the complaint is acknowledged.
5.2	If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	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.	Amended in response to feedback and for clarity.
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	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.	Amended in response to feedback. This sets out that residents must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman, regardless of whether extensions have been agreed.

5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.			Removed as the intention is set out in paragraph 5.8.
5.5	A complaint response must be sent 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 expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	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.	Amended for clarity.
5.6	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	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.	Unchanged.
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the	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	Amended in response to feedback and for clarity.

	response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.		already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	
5.8	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 	6.9	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:</p> <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. 	Amended for clarity.
5.9	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord's procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the	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 procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Amended in response to feedback.

	resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.			
5.10	On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	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.	Amended in response to feedback. This now confirms that escalation requests must be acknowledged within five working days.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.			Removed.
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Unchanged.
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Amended in response to feedback. This now confirms that landlords must issue its stage 2 response within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
5.14	If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	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	Amended for clarity and consistency in approach between stage 1 and stage 2.

			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.	
5.15	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	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.	Amended in response to feedback. This sets out that all residents must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman, regardless of whether extensions have been agreed.
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions and • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 	6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 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 the Ombudsman 	Amended through the consultation to confirm that complaints processes with more than two stages are not acceptable.

			Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	
5.17	Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.	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.	Removed through consultation; complaints processes with more than two stages are not acceptable.
5.18	Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.			
5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.			

5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 			
6.1	<p>Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledging where things have gone wrong • providing an explanation, assistance or reasons • apologising • taking action if there has been a delay • reconsidering or changing a decision • amending a record • providing a financial remedy • changing policies, procedures or practices. 	7.1	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • 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; 	Amended for clarity.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	
6.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents.	7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Amended for clarity.
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	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.	Amended for clarity and moved as this relates to continuous learning and improvement.
6.4	Factors to consider in formulating a remedy can include, but are not limited to, the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> length of time that a situation has been ongoing frequency with which something has occurred severity of any service failure or omission number of different failures cumulative impact on the resident resident's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities. 	7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Amended to signpost landlords to wider guidance and good practice issued by the Ombudsman.
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any	7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where	Unchanged

	remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.		appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	
6.6	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.	7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Amended to signpost landlords to wider guidance and good practice issued by the Ombudsman.
6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.			
6.8	For further information on remedies please see https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies/dispute-resolution/policy-on-remedies/			
7.1	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes, the quality of the service provided, the ability to learn and improve, and the relationship with their residents. The Ombudsman encourages landlords to use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	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.	Amended for clarity.
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling	9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint	Amended for clarity.

	culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny panels.		handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	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').	Amended for clarity.
		9.6	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.	
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders • Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, • The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable 	9.	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <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; 	Amended for clarity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) the annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	
7.5	Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.			
7.6	<p>Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 	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 c) act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. 	<p>Amended in response to feedback.</p> <p>This clarifies that standard objectives must be set for all <u>relevant</u> employees.</p>

8.1	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	8.1a)	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a) the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.	Introduces the requirement for landlords to produce annual complaints reporting which must include the self-assessment.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Amended for clarity.
8.3	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must: • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance	8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a) the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b) 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; c) any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;	Amended for clarity.

			<p>d) the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</p> <p>e) any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</p> <p>f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</p>	
		8.2	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 body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	
8.4	The Ombudsman may require landlords to repeat the self-assessment following a formal investigation if there are significant concerns over the landlord's complaint handling.	8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Amended for clarity
9.1	Under the Housing Ombudsman Scheme a member landlord must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree to be bound by the terms of the Scheme • establish and maintain a complaints procedure in accordance with any good practice recommended by the Ombudsman 			Removed. These requirements are set out in the Scheme.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as part of that procedure, inform residents of their right to bring complaints to the Ombudsman under the Scheme • publish its complaints procedure and where applicable, its membership of the Scheme, and make information about both easily accessible to those entitled to complaints on its website and in correspondence with residents • manage complaints from residents in accordance with its published procedure or, where this is not possible, within a reasonable timescale. 			
9.2	<p>Failure to comply with the conditions of membership may result in a Complaint Handling Failure Order and a requirement to rectify within a given timescale (paragraphs 13 and 73 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme). Full details of when the Ombudsman will determine that there has been a complaint handling failure can be found in our guidance document.</p>			Removed. These requirements are set out in the Scheme.
9.3	<p>When carrying out a complaint investigation the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord dealt with the complaint in accordance with the Code. Any failure identified could result in a finding of service failure, maladministration or severe maladministration for complaint handling and orders and recommendations will be made to put matters right and ensure compliance with the Code.</p>			Removed. These requirements are set out in the Code Compliance Framework.

