

Housing

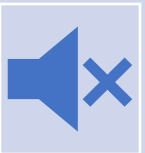
Ombudsman Service

**The Complaint Handling Code 2024
Self-assessments webinar
14 May 2024**

Housekeeping



This session will be recorded and published to give others the chance to review in the future



During the session, please keep your mic muted to minimise any background noise



We will answer pre-submitted questions first, please use the chat function for any others



You will receive a copy of the slides after the webinar has ended, as well as any additional answers



At the end, you'll be invited to give feedback on today's session – please do help us learn!

The Housing Ombudsman Service

Our vision

Improving residents' lives and landlords' services through housing complaints

Our values

Fairness

We are independent and impartial; we take time to listen carefully and understand the evidence

Learning

We share knowledge and insights to maximise our impact and improve services.

Openness

We are accessible and accountable; we publish information on our performance & decisions

Excellence

We work together to provide an efficient high-quality service

Our membership

1,738 landlords
covering
4.9m households

1335 housing
associations

345 local
authorities

58 voluntary
members

Self-assessments: overview



Are an opportunity to continuously review and improve services to residents



Set out to residents how you have ensured complaints will be handled in line with the Code



Are a requirement of the statutory Code for all landlords who are members of the Scheme



Must cover all housing services you provide as a landlord (directly and indirectly)



Must be completed annually, and published on your website with the governing body's response



Will be used by the Ombudsman to monitor compliance (as part of our statutory duty)

Self-assessments: an approach

Reflect and
review

Take effective
action

Gather and
document
evidence

Scrutinise and
challenge

Approve and
publish

Embed
changes

Self-assessments: ask yourself...

? Are you satisfied that your policy and/or procedure meets the Code requirements?

? Are staff fully aware of the processes and how to raise and handle complaints in line with policy?

? How do you assure that complaints are consistently handled in line with the Code?

? Do you have effective processes and systems in place to record and handle complaints?

? If you have a third party are you confident they will raise and handle complaints correctly?

? Are you reporting sufficient information to ensure processes are followed and insights captured?

Self-assessments: evidence gathering

Policies and procedures

- Reference individual sections / provisions (eg: Complaints Policy, page 2, 2.1)
- Provide links to associated policy / procedures (and check that they work!)

Reports and publications

- Reference the report clearly (and provide links if possible)
- Consider the time of the report (more recent publications are more likely to reflect current practices)

Learning and training

- Set out any training delivered / attended (could be internally or externally provided)
- If relevant, give details of any refreshers / updates completed

Scrutiny or audit activities

- Include any activities undertaken to review complaints handling; ideally including dates and timescales
- Could include independent external reviews, resident scrutiny assessments or internal audits

Self-assessments: examples

Outcome of Self-Assessment Details

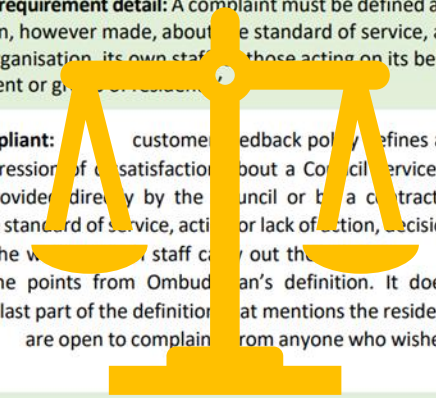
Code section	Must / Should	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
Section 1 - Definition of complaints				
1.2	Must	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'</i>	YES	We have adopted this definition of a complaint in our complaints policy which has been approved. It is available on the intranet and our customer website. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints Policy
1.3	Must	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 or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	YES	Residents do not have to use the word complaint for us to log a formal complaint. We can evidence through a review of complaints received and logged that customers do not need to use the word complaint for a formal complaint to be raised. We process complaints received from third parties in line with our complaints policy. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints Policy - 1.3 Review of sample complaints received in 2023, including through the independent review carried out by
1.6	Must	... if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	YES	Where a customer contacts us to chase up an initial service request, and this can be resolved quickly without the need for a complaint we will do this. Our complaints policy sets out that if we are unable to resolve this to the resident's satisfaction, or they request, then a formal complaint should be logged. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints Policy Customer Contact Procedure



Section 1 - Definition of a complaint Mandatory 'must' requirements

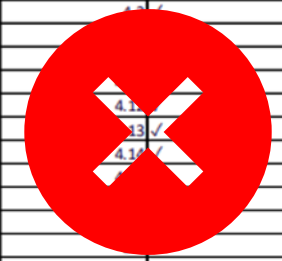
1.2. Mandatory requirement detail: A complaint must be defined as: 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

✓ **We are compliant:** Our customer feedback policy defines a complaint as: "A clear expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) including the standard of service, action or lack of action, decision taken by the Council, or the way our staff carry out their duties." This definition covers all the points from Ombudsman's definition. It does not directly mention the last part of the definition that mentions the residents, because as a council we are open to complaint from anyone who wishes to make one.



1.3. Mandatory requirement detail: 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 or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code -		Mandatory Self Assessment July 2023	
1.2	✓	4.1	✓
1.3	✓	4.1	✓
1.6	✓	5.10	✓
1.7	✓	5.11	✓
1.8	✓	5.12	✓
1.9	✓	5.13	✓
2.1	✓	5.16	✓
2.3	✓	5.17	✓
2.4	✓	5.2	✓
2.5	✓	6.1	✓
2.6	✓	6.2	✓
2.7	✓	6.5	✓
2.8	✓	6.6	✓
3.1	✓	7.2	✓
3.2	✓	8.1	✓
		8.2	✓
		8.3	✓



Self-assessments: publication

Easy to find and
access online

Use plain
English
explanations

Ensure any links
included are
working

Keep
documents
clearly dated

Include the
Governing
Body's response

Consider ways
to raise
awareness

Self-assessments: non-compliance



All landlords are required to comply with the provisions of the Code 2024



If they are unable to, then they must set out how they have met the intentions in an alternative way



Even where an alternative meets the intention of the Code, it must be reported as non-compliant



Self-reports of non-compliance will be assessed by the Ombudsman under the duty to monitor



Each explanation will be considered on its own merits – we may intervene and take action



Failure to comply with intervention may lead to a Complaint Handling Failure Order being issued

Guidance and support available



Complaint Handling Code Guidance, FAQs and key topic information



Guidance for Governing Bodies and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)



The Ombudsman's Spotlight Reports



Complaint Handling Failure Order Reports (quarterly)



The Ombudsman's Learning Reports



Duty to Monitor Team – compliance@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Keeping in touch



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www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Questions