

# Thurrock Council self-assessment – Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Self-assessment undertaken in May 2022.

## Section 1 – Definition of a complaint

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
1.2	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'</i></p>	Yes	<p>The definition of a complaint on our website and within the complaint's procedure is as follows:</p> <p><i>"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the council, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting any individual, groups of individuals or businesses."</i></p>
1.3	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>The council does not insist on residents using the word "complaint" for a matter to be handled as a complaint and this is covered within our procedure. The council's Complaints team oversee this.</p> <p>Any complaint submitted via a third party – for example, an MP or councillor – will be handled in line with the council complaints process and this is covered within our complaints procedure. The council's Complaints team oversees this.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
1.6	...if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	Yes	Service request failures will be captured as a complaint. This is detailed within our complaint procedure. The council's Complaints team oversees this.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	The council will accept a complaint, unless the matter falls within the exclusions as set out within the complaint's procedure.
1.8	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.	Yes	<p>The exclusions that are set out within the council's complaints procedure are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• something that happened more than 12 months ago although this is assessed by the council on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>• something that has already gone to court, or could have gone to court</li> <li>• a matter whereby the complainant has advised that they intend to, or have, initiated legal proceedings against the council in relation to the substance of the complaint</li> <li>• something that has its own appeal process, such as parking fines, school admissions</li> <li>• a matter that involves a potential insurance claim</li> <li>• something that is being, or has been, investigated by the relevant Ombudsman</li> </ul>
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.	Yes	<p>In cases where complaints are rejected, residents will be informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the decision and provided with an explanation</li> <li>• of their right to take the decision to the Ombudsman</li> </ul> <p>The above is detailed within our complaint's procedure.</p>

## Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request, where a resident may be unhappy with a situation that they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about the service they have/have not received.	Yes	Service requests are not service failures and are recorded separately by the council. However, a failure by the council in responding to a service request and/or if a resident raises concerns with the handling of their service request, will result in the matter being recorded as a complaint by the council. Service request failures are referred to within our complaint's procedure.
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.	Yes	This message has been communicated to our Housing Teams to ensure that when surveys are undertaken, the person completing the survey is made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.

## Section 2 – Accessibility and awareness

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	The council's complaints procedure makes it clear that individuals can make a complaint via email, phone, or letter format. In addition, complaints can also be received in person and our staff will assist the complainant if this is the case.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	<p>The complaints procedure is available on our website and details the stages, timeframes for responding to each stage and the escalation process.</p> <p>The complaints procedure is also communicated to individuals as part of our communications schedule (that we have in place as part of this code).</p>
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.	Yes	The complaints procedure is available on our website, detailing how a complaint can be made.
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.	Yes	<p>The complaints policy makes it clear that if residents need help to make a complaint, they can appoint someone to deal with it on their behalf, or if they don't have anyone to assist them, the council can help them find someone independent to speak to.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the council also makes it clear to residents via complaint acknowledgment letters that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if they require assistance to take forward their complaint, they can appoint a representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf</li> <li>• any individual representing or assisting them can accompany them at any meeting with the council, if a meeting is required to consider their complaint</li> <li>• if they require assistance with their complaint, but don't have anyone to help them, they can let us know and the council will do all it can to find them an advocate</li> </ul>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
			<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forms part of a mandatory e-learning training course within the council. The Complaints team has undertaken this training.</p>
<p><b>2.6</b></p>	<p>Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A communication schedule is in place to cover off this requirement.</p> <p>The following wording is also included in our complaint acknowledgment communication.</p> <p><i>The Housing Ombudsman Service may be able to assist you with your complaint by allowing you the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. If you need to contact the Housing Ombudsman their contact details are below:</i></p> <p><i>Phone: 0300 111 3000</i>  <i>Email: <a href="mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk">info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk</a></i>  <i>Website: <a href="http://housing-ombudsman.org.uk">housing-ombudsman.org.uk</a></i></p> <p>The complaints handling code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forms part of our annual complaints report which is a public report</li> <li>• is shared with our Tenants Excellence Panel</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.7</b></p>	<p>Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The council is clear within complaints communications – for example, acknowledgments – that the Housing Ombudsman Service may be able to assist the complainant by allowing them the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. The Ombudsman's contact details are provided to allow the complainant to make contact if required.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	Residents are informed at complaint acknowledgment stage that they have a right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point when they have exhausted the council's complaints process – this is on the basis that the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint, and affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.

### Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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 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.	Yes	Any complaint received via social media will be dealt with in line with our complaint's procedure. To assist with this, our communications team will request that the individual sends the details of their complaint via email to <a href="mailto:complaints@thurrock.gov.uk">complaints@thurrock.gov.uk</a> . The Complaints team will then follow our standard complaints process to consider the complaint. A response will only be sent back to the complainant to ensure that the council comply with the Data Protection Act.

## Section 3 – Complaint handling personnel

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure	Yes	The council has a Complaints team that manages this area of work.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	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".		
<b>3.2</b>	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	The Complaints team is trained in complaint handling and the 2-stage process in place ensures that there is no conflict of interest.

### Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>3.3</b>	<p>Complaint handlers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to act sensitively and fairly</li> <li>• be trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents</li> <li>• have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints</li> <li>• • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>The Complaints team comprises individuals who are all trained to work on a range of complaints-related matters.</p> <p>Escalation processes are in place to ensure all complaints are dealt with in line with timeframes.</p>

## Section 4 – Complaint handling principles

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>4.1</b>	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	Yes	The council does not use any extra named stages, such as stage 0. All complaints are handled in line with our 2-stage process. All complaints are acknowledged within 5 days of receipt.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	<p>concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints 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 <b>within five days of receipt.</b></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>	Yes	<p>All acknowledgement letters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the points of concern that the council consider are in scope of the complaint – and residents are given the opportunity to change this</li> <li>• a request to the resident, to confirm the outcome they are seeking</li> </ul>
4.6	<p>A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.</p>	Yes	<p>Council staff who may be the subject of the complaint, will not be involved in the complaint investigation.</p> <p>In addition to the above, any impartiality concerns will be picked up as part of complaint escalation, as stage 2 complaints are investigated outside of the service area by the Complaints team.</p>
4.7	<p>The complaint handler must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deal with complaints on their merits</li> <li>• act independently and have an open mind</li> <li>• take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest</li> <li>• consider all information and evidence carefully</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>All points of concern are identified up front by the Complaints team. Quality checks are in place, by the Complaints team, to ensure all points of concern have been fully responded to.</p> <p>Complaints handlers are trained on Data Protection to ensure information is disclosed on a need-to-know basis.</p>



Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter</li> </ul>		
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.	Yes	The Complaints team will ensure that any reasonable adjustments are adhered to, along with ensuring that complaint timeframes are met.
4.12	<p>The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set out their position</li> <li>comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>Staff members who are the subject of the complaint, will be interviewed as part of the complaint investigation. This will allow them to set out their own position.</p> <p>Residents' concerns are firmed up at the complaint acknowledgment stage. Concerns regarding overall complaints findings will be picked up as part of our complaint escalation process.</p>
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint.	Yes	Timeframes are clearly set out within our complaints procedure.
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.	Yes	<p>The council does not refuse complaint escalations.</p> <p>The reasons for the council not accepting a complaint are detailed in section 1.8 above (exclusions). These exclusions are set out within our complaints procedure.</p>
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 correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.	Yes	This information is held in our complaints system.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Yes	The council has an " <i>Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable behaviour</i> " procedure in place to manage this. This procedure is on our website.

### Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
4.3	Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.	Yes	Unrealistic outcomes will be managed as and when received. This will be managed as part of the stage 1 process.
4.4	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 whether there are any urgent actions required.	Yes	This forms part of our complains process and the council aim to resolve all complaints as part of the stage 1 process.
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.	Yes	<p>Our complaints procedure makes it clear that if residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need help to make a complaint, they can appoint someone to deal with it on their behalf</li> <li>• don't have anyone to assist, we can help them find someone independent to speak for them</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the above, residents are informed of the following at the complaint acknowledgment stage:</p> <p><i>"If you require assistance to take forward your complaint, you can appoint a representative to deal with your complaint on your behalf. This individual can accompany you at any meeting with the council if a</i></p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
			<i>meeting is required to consider your complaint. If you are considering nominating an individual to represent you, then please pass on the contact details to the council. However, if you require assistance with your complaint, but don't have anyone to help you, please let us know and the council will do all it can to find you an advocate."</i>
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.	Yes	Points of concern involving legal obligations will be firmed up at the complaint acknowledgment stage. This will allow the council to respond to the concern in question.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	Council staff are trained on data protection and information will be released on a need-to-know basis and in line with the Data Protection Act.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	The council aims to respond to all complaints within the timeframes set out within its procedure. If it is known that timeframes cannot be met, the Complaints team will inform the resident of this.
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.	Yes	Complaints handling feedback is sought by the Complaints team.
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.	Yes	The council aims to get to it right first time, however we view complaints as a mechanism to improve service delivery. Staff are supported within the council and understand the value of learning from complaints.
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their	Yes	Restrictions are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Prior to any restrictions being put in place, residents are

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.		warned beforehand that any repeat of unacceptable behaviour will result in restrictions being applied. However, at the point of applying restrictions, one form of contact is always offered/provided by the council.

## Section 5 – Complaint stages

### Mandatory 'must' requirements – Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>5.1</b>	Landlords must respond to the complaint <b>within 10 working days</b> 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.	Yes	The council always aims to respond within 10 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 10-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the complaints team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
<b>5.5</b>	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.	Yes	This is standard practice.
<b>5.6</b>	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.	Yes	This is standard practice.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>5.8</b>	<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"> <li>• the complaint stage</li> <li>• the decision on the complaint</li> <li>• the reasons for any decisions made</li> <li>• the details of any remedy offered to put things right</li> <li>• details of any outstanding actions</li> <li>• details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer</li> </ul>	Yes	This is standard practice.

### Mandatory 'must' requirements – Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>5.9</b>	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 resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.	Yes	This is standard practice.
<b>5.10</b>	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.	Yes	This is standard practice.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Yes	This is standard practice.
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	Stage 2 complaints are considered independently by the Complaints team.
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint <b>within 20 working days</b> 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.	Yes	The council always aim to respond within 20 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 20-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the complaint stage</li> <li>• the complaint definition</li> <li>• the decision on the complaint</li> <li>• the reasons for any decisions made</li> <li>• the details of any remedy offered to put things right</li> <li>• details of any outstanding actions</li> <li>• if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage 3</li> <li>• if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied</li> </ul>	Yes	This is standard practice.

### Mandatory 'must' requirements – Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	The council operates a 2-stage process.
5.20	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the complaint stage</li> <li>• the complaint definition</li> <li>• the decision on the complaint</li> <li>• the reasons for any decisions made</li> <li>• the details of any remedy offered to put things right</li> <li>• details of any outstanding actions</li> <li>• details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied</li> </ul>	Yes	This is not applicable as the council operates a 2-stage process.

### Best practice 'should' requirements – Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
5.2	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.	Yes	For stage 1 complaints, the council always aim to respond within 10 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 10-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
			team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
<b>5.3</b>	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.	Yes	This is covered in 5.2 above. In addition to this, the council are clear within complaints communications (e.g., acknowledgments), that the Housing Ombudsman Service may be able to assist the complainant by allowing them the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. The Ombudsman contact details are provided to allow the complainant to make contact if required.
<b>5.4</b>	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.	Yes	This is standard practice within the council.
<b>5.7</b>	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 response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	This is standard practice within the council.

### Best practice 'should' requirements – Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>5.14</b>	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.	Yes	For stage 2 complaints, the council always aim to respond within 20 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 20-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the complaints



Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
			team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
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.	Yes	This is covered in 5.14 above. In addition to this, the council is clear within complaints communications – for example, acknowledgments – that the Housing Ombudsman Service may be able to assist the complainant by allowing them the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. The Ombudsman contact details are provided to allow the complainant to make contact if required.

### Best practice 'should' requirements – Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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 <b>within 20 working days</b> 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.	Yes	The council does not operate a 3-stage process.
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.	Yes	The council does not operate a 3-stage process.

## Section 6 – Putting things right

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
6.1	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.	Yes	The council's process for dealing with complaints is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge where things have gone wrong and apologising in these instances</li> <li>• make it clear what action will be taken when complaints are upheld</li> <li>• offering financial remedies, if relevant</li> </ul>
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.	Yes	The council's complaints procedure sets out a range of remedies that are considered when resolving complaints.
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Remedies offered will be clear and are tracked by the Complaints team, to ensure they are actioned by individual service areas.
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.	Yes	All these factors are considered at the point of offering compensation payments.

## Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	This is standard practice. For example, any changes to process/procedures or reminders for staff (as forms of learning actions), will benefit more than just the complainant, as the learning action should avoid a repeat occurrence.
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.	Yes	Legal advice will be obtained as and when required.

## Section 7 – Continuous learning and improvement

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling 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.	Yes	<p>The council report back on learning and improvement from complaints via its annual report. This report goes to Digital and Demand Board, Directors Board and then onto Standards and Audit Committee.</p> <p>Learning from complaints is shared with our Tenants Excellence Panel.</p> <p>Learning from complaints is also a key part of our communication schedule, which we have in place as part of this code.</p>

## Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
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.	Yes	The council has a lead member with responsibility for complaints. Complaints-related reports go via this member prior to going onto committee.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders</li> <li>regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling</li> <li>the annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable</li> <li>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</li> <li>the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge</li> </ul>	Yes	This information is included within our annual complaints reports.  The Housing Ombudsman annual report will be included if this is received in a timely manner. If not, the council still summarise all Housing Ombudsman decisions within its annual 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	Yes	Trends are analysed and are presented to senior management via Digital and Demand Board and Directors Board.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.		
<b>7.6</b>	<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"> <li>• have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments</li> <li>• take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others</li> <li>• act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing</li> </ul>	Yes, for the Complaints team	This standard objective is in place for all staff who work within the Complaints team.

## Section 8 – Self-assessment and compliance

### Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
<b>8.1</b>	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	Yes	This will be undertaken annually.
<b>8.2</b>	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	The self-assessment will be undertaken in the event of a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.
<b>8.3</b>	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:	Yes	All self-assessments will be:

Code section	Code requirement	Comply?	Evidence, commentary and explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to resident</li> <li>• include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reported to committee</li> <li>• published on the council's website</li> <li>• included within the annual complaints report</li> </ul>