

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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>	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council's complaints policy includes this definition of a complaint.
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 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.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The word 'complaint' does not have to be used for the council to treat it as such. Complaints submitted by third parties or advocates are treated in the same way as the council would otherwise.
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	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council's complaints policy sets out the difference between a service request and a complaint.

	be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			
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.	Yes		The council does not pause the handling of a service request if there has been a complaint made and always raise a complaint if the resident expresses dissatisfaction.
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.	Yes	(Tenant Survey to follow)	The new tenant survey will be going out later this year and will include a statement about how to make a complaint.

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council clearly states reasons for not accepting a complaint within the policy. Each complaint is considered on its own merits. If a complaint is not accepted, we will provide an explanation to the resident as to why.
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. 	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council's complaints policy sets out the reasons why a complaint would not be accepted.

2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The complaints policy states that the council will not investigate late complaints unless it is decided there are good reasons and that these should still be acknowledged.
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.	Yes		The council always accepts complaints unless they fall within an exception, in which case the resident will be informed.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council's complaints policy sets out the exclusion criteria for complaints. A blanket approach is not applied. Each complaint is considered based upon its own merits.

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints	<p>Residents can raise a complaint by the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completing the online complaint form. ● Calling the switchboard and verbally reporting complaint. ● Making a complaint by post to the address supplied. ● Contacting their local housing officer and verbally reporting a complaint. ● Posting a written complaint to the office. ● Contacting their local MP or Councillor to advocate on their behalf. ● Granting an advocate permission to raise

				<p>complaints on their behalf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting the relevant ombudsman to raise complaints through them.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes		There is no requirement for a customer to choose one route prior to another. Staff are aware of the complaints process and can pass the complaint on through the appropriate channels.
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes		The council does not view a high volume of complaints as negative, and each complaint is treated by its own merits.
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.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council's complaints policy is available through the website and clearly details the two-stage process for complaints.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The complaints policy explains how we will publicise details of the policy

				as well as the Ombudsman's Complaint handling code.
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes		The council allow representatives to raise and deal with complaints on a resident's behalf, should they wish.
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.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints	The council provides information regarding the residents right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service on the complaints section of the website, as well as in the stage 2 response templates.

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes		The council has a complaints team whose role is to ensure reporting, take responsibility for complaint handling and liaise with the Ombudsman.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		The council's complaints team can access staff at all levels and facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	No		The council recognises that this is an area that could be improved and as such training and briefings will be arranged for staff and there will be new processes and key performance indicators. This will ensure there is a culture of learning from complaints and the importance of complaints are recognised.

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council has one complaints policy. Residents are not treated any differently if they complain.
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council has two complaint stages as set out in the complaints policy. There are no additional or pre stages.
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.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council has a two-stage complaints policy.
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	No		Where a customer makes a complaint to a service there is not an expectation that they would need to go through both complaints processes. Work is underway to have a single complaints process with contractors.

5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	No		As above (5.4).
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	No		The Council sets out the understanding of the complaint in the response to the customer but not at the stage it is received and does not actively request an expected outcome from the customer.
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes		This is made clear to customers and where there is an area that the council is not responsible for the customer will be notified.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; • give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; • take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and • consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes		Complaints are always dealt with upon their own merits, independently and with an open mind by the complaint handler. All relevant information and evidence are considered, and the resident is given the opportunity through the correspondence to set out their position.
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the	Yes		This is within the policy and practice but from the analysis that we have

	resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.			completed we recognise that it does not always happen, and we are working on improving this.
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.	Yes		The services hold information about the ways that customers need to be communicated with. This is adhered to when a complaint is received to ensure that the customer is communicated to in an effective way. As part of this assessment, we recognised that this could also be asked at the complaint stage and the form will be updated to reflect this.
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.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council does not refuse to escalate complaints except for the reasons set out in the complaints policy.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes		The council keeps accurate records of all complaints at all stages including their outcomes.

5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes		The council always seeks to remedy a complaint in the first instance.
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.	Yes	Customer behaviour and incident policy (canterbury.gov.uk)	There is a Customer Behaviour and Incident Policy which details how this is managed.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Customer behaviour and incident policy (canterbury.gov.uk) Managing unreasonable actions by complainants: A guide for organisations - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Canterbury City Council's Customer and Incident Behaviour Policy refers to the LGSO's guide on this matter and reference to Equality considerations in parts 1,3,4,5 & 6 of this guide.

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes		All complaints begin at stage 1 regardless of their complexity. Individual circumstances are considered when resolving a complaint.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	The council acknowledges, logs and triages all complaints within 5 working days.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Canterbury City Council Complaints Policy	This is set out within the complaints policy. However, we acknowledge that not all stage 1 complaints are completed within the required timescale, and we are working on improving this position.
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the	Yes		This is within the policy, but it is acknowledged that this does not always happen but

	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.			endeavour to improve this position.
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.	Yes		When a customer is advised they are informed of the timescales and contact details for the Ombudsman.
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.	Yes		The council issues complaint responses when the answer to the complaint is known, not when any actions have been completed.
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.	Yes		The council clearly addresses all the points the resident is raising in their complaint as part of the response and provide clear rationales for any decisions.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably	Yes		The council endeavours to deal with multiple issues in one instance and will add additional requests in the complaint if raised prior to the response being sent. If additional complaints arise following the completion of

	delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.			the complaint a new complaint will be taken.
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"> • 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 • details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes		This is included in all complaint responses and the complaint stage letter templates support in doing this.

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes		The council does not decline to escalate a complaint to stage 2 if the customer wishes us to.
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.	Yes		All complaints are acknowledged, logged and triaged within 5 working days.

6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes		The council does not insist that a resident justifies their reasoning should they wish to escalate their complaint to stage 2.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes		A stage 2 complaint is dealt with by a senior, independent manager.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes		This is within the policy, but it is acknowledged that not all stage 2 complaints are completed within the required timescale. The council is working on improving this position.
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes		This is within the policy, but it is acknowledged that this does not happen in all cases and the council is working on improving this position.
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.	Yes		When a customer is advised they are informed of the timescales and contact details for the Ombudsman.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the	Yes		The council issues complaint responses when the answer to the complaint is known,

	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.			not when any actions have been completed.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes		The council clearly addresses all the points the resident is raising in their complaint as part of the response and provide clear rationales for any decisions.
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"> • 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 • details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied. 	Yes		This is included in all complaint responses and the complaint stage letter templates support in doing this.
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes		The council does not have a further stage to the complaint process, and all suitable staff will complete the stage 2 process.

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	Yes		<p>The council acknowledges where something has gone wrong, and detail what we will do to remedy that in the complaint response letters. The council does not yet have a compensation and redress policy.</p>
7.2	<p>Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.</p>	Yes		<p>The remedy the council offers reflects the impact the resident has suffered.</p>
7.3	<p>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.</p>	Yes		<p>The council endeavours to plainly detail what will happen and when, when offering a resolution to the resident.</p>

7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		The council does take into account the guidance issued by the Ombudsman and will give due regard to this when creating the compensation and redress policy.
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Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. • 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; • any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; • the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; • any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and • any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	No		<p>An annual performance report is created of complaints to the scrutiny subcommittee. However, it does not go into the detail requested. The next annual report will include all the required points.</p>
8.2	<p>The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing</p>	No		<p>This is not currently carried out but will be going forward.</p>

	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.			
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes		This will happen when required.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		This will happen if required.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes		This will happen if required.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes		The council always considers what improvements can be made to the service if a complaint has highlighted a problem.
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.	Yes		The council conducts analysis on complaints that seeks to identify root cause issues and subsequently introduce changes in service delivery to address these.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	No		The council reports back to the Resident Engagement Panel and scrutiny panel about complaints but acknowledge that there is some work to do on wider learning points which will be in the service improvement and implementation plan.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes		The council has a senior officer who acts as the complaints lead.

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').	Yes		There is an appointed lead in place.
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.	Yes		There is a responsible lead that is able to provide this information.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; • regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; • regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and • annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	No		Information is provided to Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC') but not all information listed. This will be done on a regular basis going forward.
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint	No		The council recognises this important measure towards

	<p>handling for all relevant employees or third parties 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; and• act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.			<p>achieving a more positive and proactive culture in dealing with complaints and will look to implement this as part of the implementation plan.</p>
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