

Service Improvement Report for Complaints following Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2026

We have made several improvements in our 2025/26 service improvement plan. There is still room for improvement and areas that we want to continuously improve upon by monitoring and reassessing the way we deal with complaints.

Improvements we have made

Housing staff have been trained on complaints handling and the mandatory training programme continues to be in place for all housing staff to offer refreshers and provide the skills for all new starters.

Management continue to closely monitor all complaints through weekly meetings and weekly reporting to improve response rates.

We have improved alignment between contractor-handled complaints and the council's two-stage complaints process through training and clearer expectations on how complaints are identified and logged. This relates to code provision 5.4. We will monitor this throughout 2026/27 to ensure the training given is implemented so that there is only one two stage complaints process for residents to go through.

We have strengthened oversight of contractor-handled complaints by clarifying responsibilities, delivering complaints handling training, and reinforcing accountability for compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. This relates to code provision 5.5. We will monitor this throughout 2026/27 to ensure the training has been implemented and embeds in contractor processes so that contractors comply with the code.

Code Provision	Code Requirement	Improvement	Actions (Due dates)	Current Status
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Complaints being directed to Canterbury City Council from housing contractors is a relatively new process and requires additional monitoring to ensure it is working correctly and all complaints are being received.	Complaints to continue to be monitored from housing contractors to ensure they are being appropriately directed into the Canterbury City Council complaints system.	In progress. Continuous improvement

		Any new contractors need to be advised of the process and appropriately trained.	Ensure new housing contractors are advised of the process for complaints and appropriately trained.	and monitoring
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.	We have kept this in our 2026/27 service improvement because the complexity of some of the complaints coming through would suggest there is still a need to help staff understand when extensions are needed. Support is in place for investigators to understand how to use extensions appropriately.	Weekly monitoring of volumes, compliance with timescales and utilisation of extensions will continue. We will support individual officers as required.	In progress Continuous improvement and monitoring
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			

6.15	reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident 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.			
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	We continue to deal with a rising volume and complexity of complaints that challenges our capacity to respond within the timescales set and that residents rightly expect. We have experienced a 100% increase in Stage 1 complaints in 2025/26 from 2024/25 which is a trend for the housing sector evidenced by the 30% increase that the Housing	Weekly monitoring of volumes, compliance with timescales and utilisation of extensions will continue. We will support individual officers as required.	In progress. Continuous improvement and monitoring

6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Ombudsman made in 2024/25 from 2023/24, and a 129.5% increase in stage 2 complaints Therefore, close monitoring of all complaints by management through weekly meetings and weekly reporting will continue for 2026/27. We acknowledge this is an area for continuous improvement. However, we closed 157% more stage 1 complaints on time during 2025-26 compared to the previous year, despite receiving double the number of complaints. We also closed 228% more stage 2 complaints on time in 2025-26 compared to the previous year, despite over double the complaints.		
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