

Appendix A: Self-assessment form (March 2024)

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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 landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 3 (Definitions of Feedback)	The Corporate Complaint Policy for the City Council uses this definition for all complaints.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 3 (Definitions of Feedback)	Corporate Complaints Policy states; An expression of concern will not automatically enter the complaints process. We will assess the nature of the concerns raised and will allocate the complaint, comment or service request in accordance with eligibility. Where an expression of concern is made we may ask you if you want to submit a formal complaint.
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.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 3 (Definitions of Feedback)	A complaint is defined as per provision 1.2. A Service Request is defined as; a request from a resident to Stoke-on-Trent City Council requiring action to be taken.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 3 (Definitions of Feedback)	Corporate Complaints Policy states; Service requests can later be escalated as a complaint if residents are dissatisfied with the response to the service request, and even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 3 (Definitions of Feedback)	Corporate Complaints Policy states; On occasion we may ask you to provide feedback on services through the use of surveys. Expressions of dissatisfaction expressed through surveys of this kind will not automatically be considered as a complaint, although, if it is possible, we may contact you to offer the opportunity to raise 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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 5 (Excluded Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Each complaint will be considered on its own merit prior to being excluded.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 5 (Excluded Complaints)	Details of excluded complaints set out within the Corporate Complaints Policy.

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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 5 (Excluded Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states: Complaints where you have known about the incident being complained about for more than 12 months. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 5 (Excluded Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; If for any reason we are not able to accept your complaint we will provide a full written explanation of the reasons why. You can still contact the Ombudsman even if your complaint has not been accepted and the refusal letter will provide the relevant contact details.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 5 (Excluded Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Each complaint will be considered on its own merit prior to being excluded.

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	<p>Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 4 (How to Complain, Make a Comment or Leave a Compliment)</p> <p>Unitas Website: Customer Feedback - Unitas</p>	<p>The City Council accepts complaints via a number of routes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online forms • In Writing • Email • Telephone <p>In addition, all staff have access to the online reporting portal for complaints so that complaints can be logged by any member of staff.</p> <p>Complaints about the repairs and maintenance service can be made directly to the contractor (Unitas).</p>
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	<p>Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 4 (How to Complain, Make a Comment or Leave a Compliment)</p> <p>Unitas Website: Customer Feedback - Unitas</p>	<p>All staff have access to the online reporting portal for complaints so that complaints can be logged by any member of staff.</p> <p>Complaints about the repairs and maintenance service can be made directly to the contractor (Unitas).</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Corporate Complaints Policy; Section 1 (Introduction)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Stoke-on-Trent City Council welcomes feedback from residents, service users and their families. Your feedback can help us to inform, review and improve the services that we provide or commission.
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	The Corporate Complaints Policy is available here: Complaints, comments and compliments procedure Stoke-on-Trent	
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	Corporate Complaints Policy; Section 2 (Contacting Stoke-on-Trent City Council)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; We want to make sure that all residents, service users and their families know how to provide us with feedback, particularly when things go wrong. This Policy will therefore be made available via our website and we will promote opportunities for feedback regularly through our correspondence with residents and our social media channels.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	<p>Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 2 (Contacting Stoke-on-Trent City Council)</p> <p>Unitas Website: Customer Feedback - Unitas</p>	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; There could be times when you may need to have a representative deal with the complaint on your behalf, or to represent or accompany you to meetings. We will ask you for written consent to the complaint being managed or supported by a representative.
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	<p>Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 8 (Housing Ombudsman)</p> <p>City Council Website: Complain about a housing issue Complain about a housing issue Stoke-on-Trent</p> <p>Unitas Website: Customer Feedback - Unitas</p>	Information on accessing the Housing Ombudsman Service is provided on the website, within the corporate policy and on each letter issued in response to complaints.

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 City Council has a dedicated Customer Feedback Team in place who take responsibility for coordinating complaint response and reporting performance and issues to the relevant internal boards and Ombudsman as required.	
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 Customer Feedback Team is a central team with access to all services and landlord functions across the city council and Unitas. Clear processes are in place to define the management level required for complaint handling at each stage of the process.	

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	Yes	Operational Leads and Strategic Managers have received training on Complaint Handling. Effective peer support is also in place to support newer managers in handling completion.	Training for managers was completed some time ago and updates against the new code are required. This is included within the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan. Work with a dedicated tenants panel is helping to develop the content of training to ensure that we build skills and values within the workforce that reflect those expected of our tenants. All actions in this plan are expected to be completed by October 2024.
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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	Corporate Complaints Policy is in place and published.	
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	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	
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.	Yes	The City Council has a Service Level Agreement in place with the Repairs and Maintenance Contractor (Unitas LTD) setting out the requirements in relation to complaint responses. Processes are in place the City Council to deal directly with all Stage 2 complaints to ensure issues are resolved with impartiality.	
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	The City Council has a Service Level Agreement in place with the Repairs and Maintenance Contractor (Unitas LTD) setting out the requirements in relation to complaint responses. Processes are in place the City Council to deal directly with all Stage 2 complaints to ensure issues are resolved with impartiality.	

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.	Yes	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Within the acknowledgement we will set out our understanding of the complaint. If any aspect of the complaint does not fall under the remit of Stoke-on-Trent City Council we will tell you in the acknowledgement. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear we may wish to call you for clarification, however, a written summary of the conversation will be provided.
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	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states: If any aspect of the complaint does not fall under the remit of Stoke-on-Trent City Council we will tell you in the acknowledgement.
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; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 revealed that complaints handlers would welcome further guidance on investigating complaints and taking measures to address them. This action is picked up in the Complaints Handling Improvement Plan and all actions are expected to be completed by October 2024.

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.	Yes	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; If the complaint is more complex, we may take longer to respond, but we will agree a suitable extension timescale with you and keep you informed at suitable intervals.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 2 (Contacting Stoke-on-Trent City Council)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states: We take our duties under the Equality Act 2010 very seriously and anticipate the need to make reasonable adjustments for when you need to access the complaints process via a different channel. We will keep a record of any reasonable adjustments that have been agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities that you disclose.
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	Corporate Complaints policy sets out the 2-stage process: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	

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	<p>Details of the complaint are held on a single system (RESPOND) and managed through the Customer Feedback Team. The same system is used by Unitas Ltd to deal with complaints about repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>Details of how the information is used is set out in the Customer Feedback Privacy Notice: Fair processing notices - Customer feedback team Stoke-on-Trent</p>	
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 7 (Remedies)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states, A remedy may be offered at any point in the complaints process.
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	<p>Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 10 (Unacceptable Behaviour and Complex Customers and Cases)</p> <p>Unreasonable and Persistent Complainants Policy: Policies, procedures and strategies directory - Unreasonably-persistent complainants policy statement Stoke-on-Trent</p>	

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	Corporate Complaints: Section 10 (Unacceptable Behaviour and Complex Customers and Cases)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour will be appropriate to their needs and will demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
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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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days of the complaint being received.

6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The percentage of Stage 1 responses provided within the required timescale (10 working days) is a key measure within the monthly performance reports to Senior Managers. The direction of travel in relation to this measure is also reported.
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.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 have shown that in many instances' tenants are contacting services requesting an update on their complaint. Actions to identify this issue are set out the in the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan. All actions set out in this plan are expected to be completed by October 2024.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Each time we contact you with regards to your complaint we will provide contact details of the relevant 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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The complaint response will be sent once the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned as quickly as possible and we will provide you with regular updates.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The stage 1 response will be in writing, cover all elements of the complaint and will be in clear, plain language
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 delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Where you 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.

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. 	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	<p>The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The stage 1 response will be in writing, cover all elements of the complaint and will be in clear, plain language confirming:</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 resident is not satisfied with the response. <p>Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 have identified some weaknesses in responses, particularly in relation to the use of plain language and the reasons for decisions. Actions to address these issues are set out in a Complaint Handling Improvement Plan and include further training for staff and increased quality assurance measures.</p>
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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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Your complaint will be assessed, and we will contact you within 5 working days of the complaint being received to advise you on whether your complaint will be escalated to a stage 2.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Please contact us by email requesting that the complaint is escalated, and where possible, outlining the reasons why you are still dissatisfied and what you feel can be done to resolve the matter to your satisfaction.

6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The City Council operates clear escalation processes for handling complaints and the level of seniority of the accountable person escalates at each level to ensure that complaints are reviewed by a different person at Stage 2.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The percentage of Stage 2 responses provided within the required timescale (20 working days) is a key measure within the monthly performance reports to Senior Managers. The direction of travel in relation to this measure is also reported.

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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	<p>The Corporate Complaints Policy states: If the complaint is more complex, we may take longer to respond, but, we should agree a suitable extension timescale with you and keep you informed at suitable intervals. We will provide you with clear reasons why the extension is required.</p> <p>Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 have shown that in some instances' tenants are contacting services requesting an update on their complaint. Actions to address this issue are set out the in the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan.</p>
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states: Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached we will provide you with the relevant Ombudsman's contact details so that you can challenge the proposed timeliness of the response.

6.17	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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The stage 2 response will be in writing, cover all elements of the complaint and will confirm in clear, plain language: 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.
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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The stage 2 response will be in writing, cover all elements of the complaint and will confirm in clear, plain language
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: 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	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 6 (Stages of Complaints)	Housing Ombudsman details are set out in all Stage 2 responses. This information forms part of the standard letter template for all complaint responses. Robust quality assurance measures are in place for Stage 2 complaints through sign off by the Assistant Director for Housing Services. Responses are also coordinated through a

	g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			single Strategic Manager to support a consistent approach.
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Responses to Stage 2 complaints are all signed off at Assistant Director level to ensure quality and input from all relevant staff.	

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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 7 (Remedies)	<p>Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 has shown that the remedies offered to tenants tend to focus on apologies and actions to rectify immediate issues. There is very limited evidence of changes to policy, procedures or practice resulting from complaints. This is addressed by actions set out in the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan.</p>

7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 7 (Remedies)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; Where a complaint investigation identifies that things have gone wrong, we will work with you to put things right and to recognise the impact on you as a result of what went wrong. The general principle is that, as far as possible, you should be put back into the position you would have been in if things had not gone wrong.
7.3	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	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 7 (Remedies)	Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 have shown that the responses to complaints can lack detail in terms of timescales for remedies to be put in place. This is identified as part of an ongoing training need and actions are incorporated into the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan. All actions in this plan are expected to be completed by October 2024.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 7 (Remedies)	The Corporate Complaints Policy states; The Council will follow the Local Government Ombudsman's guidance on good practice when determining the appropriateness and level of any financial compensation

Section 8: Putting things right

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"> 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; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 11 (Monitoring and Reporting)	<p>The Corporate Complaints Policy states; A report reviewing the issues raised through complaints for Stoke-on-Trent City Council will be produced annually. This report includes the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter, and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment which provides statistics on complaints received and decisions made, together with general feedback on performance.</p>
8.2	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>Annual Report 2022/23: Your council, your city Stoke-on-Trent</p>	

8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes		
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	We are aware of this requirement and have staff in place to support requests if they are made. We monitor against all Housing Ombudsman determinations to ensure recommendations are complied with and this is completed as part of the wider approach to transformation and service improvement.	
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	Reporting non-compliance to the Housing Ombudsman is the responsibility of the Assistant Director for Housing Management and Community Safety through the Service Improvement and Transformation Governance Arrangements.	

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	Monitoring forms are completed for each complaint to record outcomes and learning.	Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024, and reviews of complaint handling completed by the service have shown limited learning from complaints to inform wider service improvements. This is being addressed through a Complaint Handling Improvement Plan, overseen by senior managers as part of the Transformation and Service Improvement programme. All actions set out in this plan are expected to be completed by October 2024.
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	Complaint Handling is identified as a core function for managers across the service. There is clear reporting on the numbers and timescales for complaints, plus satisfaction, to senior managers within the service. Service Improvement processes are in place which monitor ongoing work to deliver improvements to the complaint handling approach and an improvement plan is in place.	Quality assurance checks completed in February 2024 indicate that complaints could be resolved earlier in the process in many instances and further training and support is required to ensure staff handling complaints are focussed on seeking resolution. Actions are incorporated into the Complaint Handling Improvement Plan – specifically relating to ongoing quality checks, staff training and improved oversight. All actions set out in this plan are expected to be completed by October 2024.

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.	Yes	<p>Information on complaints is shared routinely with key stakeholders, including staff as part of a structured performance report. This report is shared with our tenants via the Tenants Voice Group.</p> <p>A Tenant Panel is in place to review the approach to complaint handling, support quality assurance checks and help to inform ongoing improvements.</p>	Report approved by the Housing Service Improvement and Transformation OBM – 20/03/2024
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 senior leads for complaint handling are the Assistant Directors for the service. Information on complaints is reported through the Operational Business Meetings (OBM) via monthly performance reports. They also receive information on improvement works as part of monthly Service Improvement and Transformation meetings.	Report approved by the Housing Service Improvement and Transformation OBM – 20/03/2024
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	The nominated Member Responsible for Complaints is the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and Planning.	Report approved by the Housing Service Improvement and Transformation OBM – 20/03/2024

9.6	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>Monthly briefings between the Assistant Directors for the service and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and Planning. These briefings cover a range of topics including scheduled performance updates, feedback on Ombudsman cases, service improvement plans and specific policy updates.</p>	<p>Report approved by the Housing Service Improvement and Transformation OBM – 20/03/2024</p>
9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <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; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and c. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	<p>Monthly briefings between the Assistant Directors for the service and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and Planning. These briefings cover a range of topics including scheduled performance updates, feedback on Ombudsman cases, service improvement plans and specific policy updates.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and Planning also receives a monthly performance report which includes the updates on volumes and outcomes.</p> <p>The annual report on performance and service improvement is scheduled to be presented to senior leads, including the MRC, through the Stakeholder Group arrangements.</p>	<p>Report approved by the Housing Service Improvement and Transformation OBM – 20/03/2024</p>

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> <p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>	Yes	Corporate Complaints Policy: Section 1 (Introduction)	<p>The Corporate Complaints Policy states; We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with all feedback quickly and efficiently. • Put things right where we are at fault. • Treat all feedback confidentially and fairly.
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