



Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code

Annual Report

Governing Body Response

The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code requires Registered Providers to publish an annual report about how they have responded to and handled complaints.

The Council's annual report for 2024 – 2025 is published on our website.

The report has been considered, supported and approved by the Council's Resources Board and the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

The report to the Resources Board is included with this statement. The recommendations in the report were approved at the meeting of the Board dates 20th1 October 2025.

The Council's appointed Member Responsible for Complaints is Councillor Denise Clews.

Councillor Clews has signed this statement to give assurance to tenants and the Ombudsman service that complaints handling is carefully and closely overseen.

Signed on behalf of the Council

Councillor Denise Clews

Member Responsible for Complaints

Angela Coates BA Hons MCIH Director of Housing

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Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

24 July 2025

Report of the
Director of Housing

Landlord Service - Complaints
Handling

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Board with an update on complaints received about its landlord services during 2024-2025.

Recommendation to the Group;

- a That the contents of the report be considered;
- b That the importance of meeting terms of the Ombudsman's Code be acknowledged;
- c That the necessity to complete a self assessment about how we manage complaints and submit it to the Housing Ombudsman and share it publicly is noted;
- d That the importance of learning from complaints is supported; and
- e That the annual report at Appendix B is considered and agreed.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 The Borough Wide Tenants Forum has considered a report on the complaints received to date.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code became a statutory requirement from 1 April 2024 for all social housing landlords. The foreword to the Code says, "The heartbeat of this code is enabling a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector." The Ombudsman says, "Landlords must embrace complaints through increased transparency, accessibility and complaint handling governance, demonstrating that residents are core its service delivery and good complaint handling is central to that."
- 3.2 The Ombudsman will monitor compliance. This will involve ensuring the landlord:
- has scrutinised and challenged its compliance with the Code, complaints handling performance and learning from complaints at its governing body and published the outcome on its website;
 - complies with the code in a policy, and that any deviations are explained and are reasonable;

- 3.3 The Housing Ombudsman service will consider the Council's self-assessment and annual report for 2024 – 2025 and will confirm whether we meet the terms of the Statutory Code. They have asked us to complete a return to them by 30 September 2025.
- 3.4 Complaints must be acknowledged within 5 working days. Landlords must respond to a complaint at Stage 1 in 10 working days. Responses at Stage 2 must be within 20 working days.
- 3.5 Landlords must:
- have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. This role may be in addition to other duties.
 - 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
 - appoint a member of the governing body to have a lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints (the MRC)
- 3.6 The complaints policy for the Council's landlords service is attached at **Appendix A**.

4 Review of complaints received during 2024-2025

- 4.1 Our policy and procedure for handling complaints is published on the Council's website. The Chief Executive's Service receives complaints, acknowledges them, tracks them and provides summary reports. The Director of Housing meets with the Member Responsible for Complaints (Councillor Clews) regularly to review what tenants are telling us.
- 4.2 The published information tells customers that the Council is committed to providing positive housing services that meet our published standards and deliver good customer care. It encourages them to give feedback so that we know what is working well and what we need to do to improve.
- 4.3 The service is acting to encourage feedback and complaints to promote learning.
- 4.4 From April 2024 to March 2025 the Housing Division responded to 60 complaints at Stage 1 of its complaint's procedure (there was a total of 37 last year).

8 complaints were made at Stage 2 (there was a total of 3 last year).

One complaint has been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service and is still being considered by them.

During the same period the Housing Division received 74 compliments.

- 4.5 38 of the Stage 1 complaints were about the maintenance service.

22 of the Stage 1 complaints were about the management service.

6 of the Stage 2 complaints were about the maintenance service – 1 was withdrawn before the complaint was resolved. Another was not responded to in the statutory required timescale of 20 working days.

2 of the Stage 2 complaints were about the management service

- 4.6 There were some commonalities in the complaints that were received about the maintenance service. Largely they are concerned with the time taken to complete a job or lack of information about when it will be appointed. Some of this is linked with follow on work after a first visit.
- 4.7 The complaints received about the management service were individual. Two were about our approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour reports. Some show an increasing concern about the length of time it is taking to rehouse applicants who are homeless.

Six were about how their housing register application was considered. In one case a concern was raised about not accepting a family member on the list but we were able to explain that the assessment had not been completed. In one case the applicant had visited the One Stop Shop without an appointment and could not be seen at the time they arrived. In two cases there was concern that some of the information provided had not been considered in the assessment undertaken. One applicant thought that they had been excluded because of the wording on the advert. One applicant was concerned about the length of time they were waiting for the vacancy they had been offered to become available.

Three complaints were about how tenancies had ended. One was concerned with a misunderstanding about the utility company for the vacancy, one was concerned with when the keys to the property were submitted and the end of tenancy date and one was concerned with a letter that had been sent about a debt at the end of a family member's tenancy.

- 4.8 In the Stage 2 complaints that have been responded to the reviewer upheld the findings of the officer responding at Stage 1. One was about a request to move home, the other was about the attitude of a member of staff and one wanted to be re-imbursed for their housing costs. In another the tenant was not satisfied that we had attended their repair safely.
- 4.9 The Annual Report is attached at Appendix B and will be published following the Resources Board meeting. The self-assessment has been reviewed and will be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30th September 2025.

5 **Learning from Complaints & Anticipating Service Demand**

- 5.1 Whilst we can acknowledge and respond to complaints in a positive manner it is important that we learn from them so that we can improve our services. We can consider whether there are systemic issues in the way we deliver our services and also whether we can change our approach to service delivery.
- 5.2 There are some specific considerations in our learning and some which are more general.
- 5.3 They key areas for our consideration for 2025-2026 based on complaints received are:
- All services should be delivered with good customer care – including from contractors. We have completed Equalities, Inclusion and Diversity training and the policy statement has been agreed. We need to develop systems of work that reflect the training and policy and monitor customer feedback.
 - We need to deliver reported repairs in the timescales agreed and when we cannot do so keep the tenant informed. The new structure for the Maintenance Service is in place. Systems of work must now underpin the efficiency we need from this service.
- 5.4 Our learning actions will include:

The Council has changed the structure of the Maintenance Service so that it has better capacity to meet the needs of both the stock and its tenants. We are acting to embed the changes now so that tenants will have less cause to 'chase' the repairs they have requested

because of delays. The team of tradesmen has been increased to deal with the demands of the service. We need to monitor the quality of workmanship and the attitude and quality of works provided by contractors. We will be able to report on transactional surveys to track the satisfaction, or otherwise, of tenants so that we can have a continual learning loop into systems of work.

Our actions to improve the service to respond to reports of anti-social behaviour have been shared with the Housing Task and Finish Group. A new policy will be submitted to the Resources Board at its meeting in October. The new case management system approved by the Resources Board last financial year has been implemented. Clear recommendations have been made following an independent review of the service.

- 5.5 The Housing Ombudsman Service publishes reports which encourage landlords to learn from complaints that they have reviewed and analysed. These spotlight reports cover a range of services provided by landlords and are published to encourage a proactive approach to understanding what concerns tenants and how landlords can improve their service delivery.
- 5.6 The Council is expected to be proactive in its service delivery and anticipate areas of service which may be at risk of failure. A spotlight report has highlighted the importance of addressing damp and mould conditions in properties. The Housing Division has a designated Surveyor that acts on reports of damp and/ or mould in 10 working days. We also have a designated Charge Hand and tradesmen that do the work required. In addition, we have introduced a specific case management system to improve customer communication, monitor delivery times and seek feedback on whether the interventions provided have worked.

6 Report Implications

6.1 Finance and Value for Money

- 6.1.1 Social Landlords pay a fee per property to fund the Housing Ombudsman Service. North Warwickshire currently pays £20,000. Sometimes it is appropriate to offer compensation as well as offering an apology to a customer and this is paid from the budget of the service which was the subject of the complaint.

6.2 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications

- 6.2.1 The Council has a duty to act in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369)

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000
Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice	Housing Ombudsman Service	Code of Practice	

