

Annual Housing Ombudsman Self Assessment



Annual Housing Ombudsman Service Self-assessment form 2025/26

There is a legal duty placed on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code. For the first time, this means landlords will need to submit their self-assessment annually to the Ombudsman.

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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments Full webpage address: https://www.kingston.gov.uk/your-council/feedback-and-complaints/submit	What is a complaint? As a guideline our general definition of a complaint is: "An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its' own staff, or those acting on its' behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents."
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage	The Housing system tracks service requests.

	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.		See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Exclusions are in the Housing Complaints Policy. Explanations are offered at the first point of contact.
2.2	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: • 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.	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Exclusions are in the Housing Complaints Policy. Explanations are offered at the first point of contact.

	Matters that have previously been considered under the 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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	At section 2.1 of the Housing Complaints Policy it states: The Council will accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issues.
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

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	Routes for making a complaint are referred to via one webpage and information on how to make a complaint are provided on this webpage. Website information with digital form: Feedback, complaints and compliments Telephone: 020 8547 5000 Postal Address provided on the website for those who wish to write in: Customer Care team Address: Guildhall 2 High Street 3 Kingston KT1 1EU Equality Strategy RBK Vulnerable Adults' Housing Policy	
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage	

	aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.		See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments There is also an accompanying procedure which provides guidance to staff.	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	At section 3.0 the Policy states: We acknowledge that some people need help to make a complaint and as such, we will normally accept complaints made on behalf of someone who is unable to do so themselves. However, for reasons of customer confidentiality, the Council will not accept complaints from one person on behalf of another unless we have their written (digital or otherwise) permission to do so. If consent is not received, the complaint can still be reviewed on the basis that any personal data will not be shared with the individual complaining. Those wishing to complain can be supported by a representative at any time. You can make a complaint yourself or if you need help
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				and support making a complaint you can ask a friend, relative, or someone you trust to make a complaint on your behalf or ask them to accompany you if you meet with us.
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

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	Dedicated Customer Care team to handle, triage, review complaints as they come in in order to assign, acknowledge and monitor. Dedicated Customer Care Manager who also acts as the Ombudsman Link Officer	Complaints are reported to the Council's Senior Leadership Team and annually to the appropriate committee.

			handling all Ombudsman casework. All complaints and performance data are reported to the Senior Leadership Team.	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	All complaint responders have access to join the Ombudsman training hub known as the 'Learning Hub' Internal training has been provided and will continue throughout the year	

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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

	Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.			
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Section 2 of the Policy states this
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 published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	as above
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: 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;	Yes	This is outlined for officers in the complaints procedure .	

	c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.			
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		See sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the Policy
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	See Code Provision 3.1 in this document	Any reasonable adjustments are recorded and monitored
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	See Code Provision 2 in this document	Complaints that are refused are recorded and reported. Any complaints that are refused are provided with an explanation.

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	Records are kept on systems.	The retention schedule for complaints has also been reviewed.
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	Housing Landlord remedies guide here Housing Compensation Policy	
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	Available on the the webpage here: Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct Kingston Council	
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard	Yes	see above	

	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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Procedure in place
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Procedure in place

6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Procedure in place
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Procedure in place
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
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		Section 4.2 of the Policy states this

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		Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
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		The Policy states this at section 4.2
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 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	This is outlined for officers in the complaints procedure	

	g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.			
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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		Section 4.2 of the Policy reflects this
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		
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		Section 4.2 of the Policy reflects this
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Section 4.2 of the Policy reflects this

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 published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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		Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
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	This is published on the Council complaints webpage See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
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		Section 4.3 of the Policy states this
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and	Yes		Officers have a procedure and template

	provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.			in place to ensure this is carried out.
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 g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Yes		Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes		Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out including signing off protocol.

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	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: • 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		Officers have a procedure and template in place to ensure this is carried out.
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	see the Council's Housing Compensation Policy	
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in	Yes	see the Council's Housing Compensation Policy	

	agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.			
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		This is outlined in the procedure

Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: 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;	Yes	See the link to the People Committee June 2025	The self assessment and associated reports were presented at the People Committee in June 2025.

	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.			
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Published on complaints webpage
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	Published on the complaints webpage
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	
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	Yes	See link to webpage here: Feedback, complaints and compliments	

	residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.			
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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	This is evidenced in regular reporting to senior leadership outlining themes, insights and recommendations for improvement.	Lessons Learned framework and reporting.
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	This is included in regular reporting to senior leadership outlining themes, insights and recommendations for improvement.	Lessons Learned framework and reporting. See reports Feedback, complaints and compliments
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	The People Committee took place on 17 June 2025.	The People Committee papers have been published on the webpage

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 Director for Housing is the responsible officer.	
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 Member with the portfolio for Housing is the MRC.	
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	The Member has access to all suitable information and officers. The Member receives monthly updates.	
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;	Yes	The Member and Senior Leadership receive regular reports as well as the annual reports.	

	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 d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Yes	This is outlined for officers in the complaints procedure	