

Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

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	Complaints policy	A section outlining 'Definitions of a complaint' is included within the Council's Complaints Policy. As per the complaint definition and the Council's complaints policy and procedure, the word 'complaint' does not have to be used. Complaints from a third party or representative follow the same process.
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	Complaints policy	Within 'Definitions of a complaint' section explains that if a customer does not explicitly use the word 'complaint', it will not prevent the Council from identifying their concerns. Complaints from a third party or representative follow the same process.
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request	Yes	Complaints policy	The Council's Policy and Procedure define what

	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.		- Complaints procedure - Guidance on the Council's website around what is a formal complaint and what is a service request.	constitutes a formal complaint and include a section titled "What is not a complaint," which explains the definition of a service request and directs customers to the appropriate Comments or General Enquiries forms. Where a submission is received as a complaint but is assessed as a service request, officers can reclassify it accordingly. In such cases, the complainant is informed that their complaint has been closed and provided with an explanation for the decision.
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	Complaints policy	Within the Council's section on "Our Approach to Handling Service Requests," it is stated that where a customer's service request has not been fulfilled as expected and they remain dissatisfied, the matter will be progressed and handled under Stage 1

				of the Council's complaints process.
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	All form(s) that include a survey advertise the Council's formal complaints process.	All surveys accessible to the Complaints Team include a link directing customers to the formal complaints process.

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	• Council's formal complaints process • Response templates to be shared as evidence	Within the Council's complaints process, where a case is closed as "not a formal complaint," the complainant will be informed via their preferred method of contact (email or letter) and provided with an explanation. This may occur where the issue is identified as a service request, a duplicate complaint, or one that should be directed to another council, or where it falls under "Other," allowing the officer to explain why the complaint will not be progressed.
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or	Yes	• Complaints policy	Within the Council's Complaints Policy, there is a section titled "What is not a

	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. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.			complaint,” which includes matters such as legal proceedings and issues that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy. Under the “How to make a complaint” section, the Council will accept complaints within 12 months of the Council being aware of the issue, or if the issue is still occurring.
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	• Complaints policy	Under the “How to make a complaint” section, the following is included: <i>“Complaints will be accepted within twelve months of the customer being made aware of the issue, or the issue occurring. Discretion will be applied for acceptance of complaints made outside of the twelve-month timescale.”</i>

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	• Council's formal complaints process • Email/Letter responses to be shared as evidence.	The Council issues responses by email or letter where a complaint is not accepted as a formal complaint. In these cases, the complainant is informed of the decision and provided with a clear explanation as to why the complaint has been closed. Both email and letter responses also include the contact details for the relevant Ombudsman Service should the complainant remain dissatisfied or the complaint is refused.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	• Complaints policy	As per the complaint definition and the Council's complaints policy all complaints will be treated individually, we will not operate a blanket approach.

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	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	Within the Council's Policy and Procedure, the "How to make a complaint" section outlines the range of channels available for submitting a complaint. The Complaints Policy highlights, under the "Equality and Diversity" section, that where a resident is unable to submit a complaint using these methods, support is available. This may include assistance from a representative (with the resident's permission) or, where no such support is available, contacting the Customer Services team. In these cases, a member of staff or the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer will help to capture and submit the complaint on the resident's behalf through the Council's online complaints system.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any	Yes	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	We have over 100 Complaint Champions across the

	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.			council. They are trained on the Ombudsman Code and best practise for complaints management. Their role is to 'champion' best practise within their service areas providing guidance and support for colleagues.
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	N/A	The Council understands and supports this statement.
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	• Complaints Policy • Complaints Procedure	The complaints policy and procedure are available on Ipswich Borough Council's website and set out clear descriptions of the stages, the processes and associated timescales. Where a resident requires reasonable adjustments and is supported in making a complaint, they will be offered a copy of the policy and procedure, particularly if they are unable to access information online.

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	Complaints policy	Within the Council's Complaints Policy there is a section for 'Communicating the Policy'. The following is mentioned <i>"The complaints policy will be clearly published on the Council's website to ensure transparency and accessibility for all residents and service users. As outlined under the Equality and Diversity section, a hard copy of the policy will be made available to customers upon request to accommodate individual needs. Internally, the policy will be distributed via staff newsletters. Any updates to the policy will be promptly communicated through these channels to ensure all stakeholders remain informed."</i> The Council has a dedicated Housing Ombudsman Service webpage here: https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/your-council/compliments-and-complaints/housing-ombudsman-service which includes a copy of the Complaint Handling Code.
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				This Ombudsman page is also advertised at the bottom of the Council's https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/your-council/compliments-and-complaints/complain-about-council-service
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	• Complaints policy • Council's formal complaints process	Within the Council's Complaints Policy, the "Equality and Diversity" section explains that residents who require support can appoint a representative to act on their behalf. This may also include an individual accompanying the resident to a meeting to help them present and consider their complaint. The Council's formal complaints process also permits third parties to submit a complaint on behalf of a resident, provided valid consent or authorisation is supplied within the completion of the online complaints form.
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	• Council's formal complaints process • Housing Ombudsman Response example	Residents are informed, by their preferred method of contact (email or letter), how to access the Housing Ombudsman throughout the complaints process. All correspondence

				issued during the complaint includes the Ombudsman's contact details.
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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	• Council's formal complaints process • Quality Assurance Complaints Officer role • Director of Communities and Operations as "Senior Lead Person" for Complaints.	The Council has a designated officer, the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer, who is responsible for reviewing complaint responses, liaising with the Ombudsman, supporting residents to make complaints and providing oversight of ongoing complaints. The Council also has a Senior Lead Person for Complaints who will oversee the Complaint Handling Code. Housing also has designated Complaint Champions for each subject area, who are responsible for drafting Stage 1 complaint responses. These responses are reviewed by the Quality Assurance

				Complaints Officer, as well as the relevant Head of Service and Assistant Director for Housing.
4.2	The Quality Assurance 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	N/A	The Council's Quality Assurance Complaints Officer has oversight of all complaints at every stage of the complaints process. The officer monitors these daily to ensure they are progressed within the required timescales and to support the timely resolution of issues for residents. The Council's Complaint Champions also have the authority to act and resolve disputes promptly and fairly within their service area. In addition, Performance and Project Officers within Customer Services maintain full oversight of ongoing complaints and provide cover for the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer during periods of absence.

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	• Stage 1 and Stage 2 Internal User Guides • Internal Complaint Guidance Videos • Recordings of Complaint Training Workshops	The Council has a designated internal 'Complaints Hub' which includes training videos and in-depth user guides at Stage 1 and Stage 2. The Quality Assurance Complaints Officer continues to ensure that staff use the complaints system correctly and is available to provide support and guidance to Complaint Champions where required. The Council's formal complaints process includes a "Lessons Learned" section within each complaint response, and this information is captured, accessible, and reported on.

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	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	Within the Council's Complaints Procedure there is a section for "How will my complaint be dealt with?", which mentions that residents will be treated fairly and courteously and that their complaint will be dealt with in confidence. Within the Council's Policy it is also mentioned under "How complaints will be handled" that the Council will act sensitively and fairly.
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	• Council's formal complaints process • Complaints procedure • Complaints policy	The Council operates a two-stage complaints process (Stage 1 and Stage 2), which was introduced in April 2024. This approach is set out in detail within the Complaints Procedure and is referenced

				throughout the Complaints Policy.
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	Council's formal complaints process	The Council has a two-stage complaints process since April 2024.
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	Council's formal complaints process	The complaint will be accepted and managed through the Council's formal complaints process. The Council's Complaint Champions will liaise with the relevant third party as part of the investigation to obtain and consider all relevant information.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	N/A	All complaint handling is internal without involvement of third parties.
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	Yes	- Council's formal complaints process - Councils' formal complaints policy	The Council's complaints process enables complainants to set out their preferred resolution at Stage 1 by responding to the question, <i>'How would you like to see this matter resolved?'</i>

	complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.			In both our acknowledgement of the complaint and the complaint response we will set out our understanding of the complaint and our understanding of the outcome the resident is seeking. If they remain dissatisfied, they can request escalation to Stage 2 and provide their reasons, although giving reasons is not mandatory. Where any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the Complaint Champion preparing the response should contact the resident for clarification, either by phone or email. All contact can be recorded in case notes within the complaints process for audit trail purposes.
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	• Council's formal complaints process • Example of 'Council not responsible for' letter and email.	Within the Council's complaints process, the Complaint Champion responding to the complainant can identify areas for which the Council is not responsible. This is recorded in a free-text field completed by the officer and, once submitted,

				is shared with the complainant via their preferred method of contact. The response also confirms that a full reply will still be provided on the remaining aspects of the complaint within the agreed timescale.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: - deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; - give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and - consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes	- Council's formal complaints process - Council policy	The Council has nominated Complaint Champions in each service area who are responsible for complaint handling. Complaint Champions will as set out in the Council's Complaints policy: - Act sensitively and fairly - Be trained to receive complaints and deal with upset and distressed Customers. - Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints. - Have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

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	• Council's formal complaints process • Council policy • Example of extension templates	The Council's complaints process issues regular reminders to officers handling cases as deadlines approach. These reminders also prompt officers to request an extension where necessary. Extensions can be applied at both Stage 1 and Stage 2, and where one is requested, the complainant is informed accordingly. If the response is provided outside of the extension timeline, the council will contact the complainant to keep them informed.
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	• Complaints policy	The Complaints Policy refers to reasonable adjustments within the <i>Equality and Diversity</i> section, specifically in relation to supporting customers who may be unable to submit their complaint independently. Within the Customer Services CRM system, any identified vulnerabilities should be recorded on the customer's profile as an 'alert'. This ensures that relevant information is

				visible whenever the customer contacts the Council. The Council also has a separate Reasonable Adjustments Policy, which must be followed at all times.
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	• Council's formal complaints process • Council's policy	The Council will only decline to escalate a complaint where there is a valid reason for doing so. Exclusion reasons are provided within the Complaint's policy under 'What is not a complaint' section. Where a complaint is submitted through the Council's online system, the complainant can progress it to Stage 2 themselves. Requests received through other channels will be reviewed and escalated on the complainant's behalf.
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	Yes	• Council's formal complaints process	The Council's complaints process maintains a full audit trail, including the original complaint, the date it was received, and copies of all formal responses issued.

	documentation such as reports or surveys.			It also includes case notes and supporting documentation, allowing officers to record updates, evidence, and contact history. This information is retained within the complaints system.
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	Council's formal complaints process	The Council's complaints process includes a section within the formal response template for "Details of any remedies offered." This enables the Council to clearly set out any actions taken or proposed to resolve the issue, which is then shared with the complainant as part of the response. Complaint Champions also complete a reporting checklist at the conclusion of each complaint to ensure that an appropriate remedy has been considered and applied, such as financial compensation, an apology, or the correction of an error. This information is then captured and included in the

				Council's quarterly and annual reporting.
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	• Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy • Complaints policy	The Council has a Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy, which is also referenced within the Complaints Policy. This policy is available to view on the Council's complaints webpage here: https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/your-council/compliments-and-complaints/complain-about-council-service
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	• Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy	The Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy includes an 'Equality and Diversity' section, which confirms that reasonable adjustments will be considered where appropriate.

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	• Council's formal complaints process • Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	The Council's complaints procedure and policy states that a full response will be completed within 10 working days from the date the complaint is acknowledged. If it is not possible to respond in this timeframe, the complainant will receive an explanation with the date that the response will be responded by, which will be no longer than an additional 10 working days. The Complaint Champion will review the complaint in full and determine the most appropriate approach. Where early resolution is possible, they may address the issue as a service request and take prompt action. If reasonable adjustments are in place,

				the complaints system will notify the officer handling the case, particularly where verbal contact may be required.
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	• Council's formal complaints process • Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy and procedure state that complaints must be acknowledged within five working days. Where an email address is provided, an automated acknowledgement will be sent. Alternatively, if no email address is available, an acknowledgement letter will be issued by post.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy and procedure state that a full response will be issued within 10 working days from the date the complaint is acknowledged.
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	Yes	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy and procedure state that where it is not possible to provide a response within the 10-working day timeframe, the complainant

	10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.			will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale, which will not exceed a further 10 working days.
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	Complaints policy	The Council's complaints policy states that, where an extension is issued, the accompanying letter or email will inform the complainant of their right to contact the relevant Ombudsman Service, and the appropriate contact details will be provided.
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	- Complaints policy - Council's formal complaints process	The Council's complaints policy states that a Stage 1 response will be issued once sufficient information is available. Where there are outstanding actions, updates will continue to be provided at Stage 1 as they progress. The complaints process also includes a response template requiring officers to confirm whether any actions remain outstanding, which is

				then shared with the complainant. In addition, a 'Further actions' section is completed as part of the end-of-case reporting and is monitored through monthly, quarterly and annual reporting. These actions are reviewed throughout by the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer, Head of Service and Assistant Director to ensure they are completed.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Council's formal complaints process	Complaint responses are reviewed to ensure all points have been addressed at each stage of the sign off process. The Quality Assurance Complaints reviews all Stage 1 complaints to ensure best practice, complies with the Complaint Handling Code and any other appropriate laws or policies.

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	• Council's formal complaints process • Complaints policy	Within the Council's Complaint's Policy, it states the following <i>"If this information relates to your original Stage 1 complaint, this will be incorporated into your Stage 1 response if it has not already been issued. If any new issues are raised which do not relate to the original complaint, or which would unreasonably delay the response this will be logged and handled as a new complaint"</i>. Where a complainant submits a further complaint relating to the same issue, this may be recorded as a duplicate. In such cases, the complainant will be notified that the matter cannot be progressed separately, as it duplicates an existing complaint. The original complaint will continue to be handled as normal, with any additional information considered as part of the
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				ongoing Stage 1 investigation.
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 g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.	Yes	• Council's formal complaints process	A list of these requirements is factored into the Council's Stage 1 and Stage 2 formal response templates for both email and letter.

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	• Council's formal complaints process	If a complainant submits their complaint online, they are able to escalate the complaint to the next stage once a response has been issued. An escalation link is available at the bottom of their Stage 1 response.

				Complaints may also be escalated to Stage 2 through alternative methods of contact (letter or verbally), which will then be progressed accordingly. Complaint responses are reviewed during the sign-off process to ensure that all points raised by the complainant have been fully addressed at each stage.
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	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure • Council's formal complaint process	When a complaint is escalated and the complainant has provided an email address, they will automatically receive an email acknowledging the escalation. If the original complaint was submitted by another method, such as by letter, information on alternative ways to escalate the complaint will be provided. The Quality Assurance Complaints Officer or another member of staff may also log the escalation

				on the complainant's behalf within this timescale. In line with the Council's Policy and Procedure, all escalations will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt.
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	• Council's policy • Council's formal complaints process.	Residents may escalate their complaint to Stage 2 once a Stage 1 response has been provided. While residents may choose to explain why they remain dissatisfied, this is not a mandatory requirement. Where additional clarification is needed, within the Complaints policy it states that further contact will be made to gain a full understanding if required.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	• Council's policy • Council's formal complaints process	Each service area has a number of designated Complaint Champions who are responsible for drafting Stage 1 complaint responses. These responses are reviewed and approved by the relevant

				Head of Service before final sign-off is completed by the Assistant Director. Where a complaint is escalated to Stage 2, the Director for the relevant service area will carry out a review of the complainant's concerns. The Stage 2 response will then be signed off by an Executive Director of the Council.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	• Complaint's policy • Council's formal complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy states that a full response to an escalated complaint will be provided within 20 working days. Where it is not possible to meet this timeframe, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised response date, which will not exceed a further 20 working days.
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	Yes	• Complaint's policy • Council's formal complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy and procedure states that a full response to an escalated complaint will be

	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.			provided within 20 working days. Where it is not possible to meet this timeframe, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised response date, which will not exceed a further 20 working days.
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	• Council's formal complaints procedure	The complainant is provided with the relevant Ombudsman's contact details in any correspondence where an extension has been issued.
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	• Complaints policy • Council's formal complaints procedure	The Council's complaints policy states that a Stage 2 response will be sent when the answer is known. For any outstanding actions the complainant will be provided with updates once they are fully investigated and the answer is known. The complaints process also includes a response template requiring officers to confirm whether any actions remain outstanding,

				which is then shared with the complainant. In addition, a 'Further actions' section is completed as part of the end-of-case reporting and is monitored through quarterly and annual reporting. These actions are reviewed throughout by the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer, Head of Service and Assistant Director to ensure they are completed.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	• Council's formal complaints process	Stage 2 complaint responses are reviewed by the relevant Director, followed by final sign-off from an Executive Director to ensure all points have been addressed. The Council's complaint policy and training material also cover the importance of ensuring all points are addressed along with reasons for decisions.

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	• Council's formal complaints process	The required elements are incorporated into the response templates used for all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint responses issued by email or letter.
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	• Council's formal complaints process	The process ensures all suitable staff members relevant to the service area are part of the sign-off process, with overarching sign off by an Executive Director.

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	• Council's formal complaints process	These requirements have been incorporated into the templates used for all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint responses issued by email or letter. The required elements are also embedded within the complaints process to help remind Complaint Champions of the Housing Ombudsman's expectations when responding to complainants. The Council is committed to learning from complaints through the inclusion of a "lessons learnt" section within the complaints process. This allows Complaint Champions and relevant senior officers to identify opportunities for service improvement. The information gathered is then collated and reported to the Executive on a quarterly basis.
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	• Housing Compensation policy	Housing Services has a compensation policy, which is linked on the Council's complaints webpage here:

				https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/your-council/compliments-and-complaints/complain-about-council-service
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	Housing Compensation policy	Any remedy offered will include the agreed amount, the date by which the remedy will be provided, and the method through which it will be delivered. This is set out within the Council's Housing Compensation Policy.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Council's formal complaints policy	The Council agrees to consider and follow any guidance provided by the Ombudsman where appropriate.

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

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: - the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; - any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; - the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; - any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and - any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes	Complaints Reporting	The Council produces an Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report. In addition, quarterly complaint reports are produced, which include complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, summaries, and lessons learnt. These reports are shared internally with the Corporate Management Team, the Senior Lead Person, and the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) for review and consideration of any appropriate actions or service improvements.

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 on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	Complaints Reporting	The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report is published on the Council's website alongside the governing body's formal response.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	- Council's policy - Complaints procedure	The Council agrees to undertake a revised Self-Assessment where any significant changes occur, in line with this Self-Assessment document. This is stated within the Council's policy. Any updated assessments will be published on the Council's website.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	Self-Assessment	The Council understands and agrees to complete a Self-Assessment when requested to do so by the Ombudsman.
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	Yes	Self-Assessment	The Council understands and agrees that, in the event of exceptional circumstances which prevent compliance with the Code, the Ombudsman will be informed, affected

	must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.			residents will be notified, and the outcome will be published on the Council's website. This will also include estimated timescales for when compliance with the Code is expected to resume.
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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	• Council's formal complaints process • Complaints reporting, analysis and continuous improvement actions	The Council is committed to learning from complaints through the inclusion of a "lessons learnt" section within the complaints process, enabling Complaint Champions and relevant senior officers to identify opportunities for service improvement. Key messages are collated and reported to the Executive on a quarterly basis.
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	• Complaints quarterly reporting	The Council agrees to collate and report complaint data as a valuable source of intelligence and service improvement. Information relating to complaints received and their outcomes is shared with Housing Services through regular reporting processes. This information is also reported quarterly to the Corporate Management Team.

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	Complaints quarterly reporting	The Council is committed to maintaining accountability and transparency to support a positive complaint handling culture. Learning outcomes and service improvements identified through complaints will continue to be shared with relevant stakeholders. The Council is also committed to learning from complaints through the inclusion of a "lessons learnt" section within the complaints process. This enables Complaint Champions and relevant senior officers to identify opportunities for improvement, with the information then collated and reported accordingly.
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	Complaints reporting	The Council has appointed the Director of Communities and Operations as the suitably senior lead person responsible for overseeing complaints handling arrangements.

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	Complaints reporting	The Council has the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Customers as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The MRC is responsible for overseeing compliance with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and supporting a positive complaint handling culture across the organisation.
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	Complaints reporting	The Council acknowledges this requirement. The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) has access to the appropriate information and staff support necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
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; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;	Yes	Complaints reporting	The Council acknowledges this requirement. The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) has access to the appropriate information, resources, and staff support required to effectively carry out their role and responsibilities.

	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	• Complaints policy • Complaints procedure • Complaints best practise training	The Council implemented a two-stage Complaints Handling Process in April 2024, in line with the requirements of the Code. This provides a consistent and structured approach to complaint handling across the organisation for all relevant employees. To support this, the Council has developed user guides and training materials to promote a unified and collaborative approach to complaint handling. The Council also recognises the importance of collective responsibility, promotes a positive learning culture rather than a blame culture, and remains committed to adhering to its Complaints Policy and Procedure.

