

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	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><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></p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Lancaster City Council’s complaint handling process uses the Housing Ombudsmans (HO) definition of a complaint.</p> <p><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></p>
1.3	<p>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.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Where the substance of feedback amounts to a complaint it is recorded as a complaint and investigated as such.</p> <p>This is even if the resident has not expressly stated they wish to make a complaint. This is catered for in the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint “A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction”</p> <p>Complaints received on behalf of a resident are handled in line</p>

				<p>with the Housing Complaints Policy providing we are satisfied we have valid authority to act.</p> <p>Some contacts such as MP or Councillor enquires are handled as complaints through the formal process if we believe that the constituent's issue is a complaint rather than an enquiry or service request.</p> <p>This is included in our Complaints Policy, and is included within our service-wide in-house training.</p>
1.4	<p>Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints policy outlines the difference between a request for service and a complaint. It also Expressly states, "If this is the first time you are reporting an issue to us, we may decide to treat this as a request for service.</p> <p>Service Requests are currently collated alongside the complaints tracker, however Council Housing is in the process of developing an improved triage process of incoming enquiries and service requests.</p>

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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Based on the definition of a complaint used by Lancaster city Council. Expressions of dissatisfaction about the response to a service request would be included in this 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	Lancaster City Council – Council Housing’s Customer Care Page Lancaster City Council - Council Housing - Customer Care Webpage Lancaster City Council – Keep Connected Webpage	Our webpage expressly states that: “An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey will not be defined as a complaint. However, wherever possible, the person completing the survey will be contacted by a member of staff to be advised on how they can pursue a complaint should they wish to. In any instance where we ask for feedback about our services, we will also provide details of how residents can raise a complaint.

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>As a landlord we do accept, log, investigate and respond to all complaints.</p> <p>Our complaints policy lists the exclusions to this in detail.</p> <p>Complaints tracker for 2024/25 includes exclusion tracker to allow monitoring of exclusions and reasons</p>
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints policy lists the exclusions to this in detail including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day service requests or initial reporting of faults. • Criticisms or disagreement with council policies. • Complaints concerning the level of rent or service charge or the amount of the rent or service charge increase.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints against individual employees which arise from dissatisfaction with a council policy or decision, and where no other basis for the complaint exists.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints policy expressly states:</p> <p>“The council will normally only accept complaints made within twelve months of the incident or circumstances that led to the complaint”</p>
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	<p>Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy</p> <p>Stage 1 & 2 – Complaint Exclusion Letter Template.</p>	<p>Our complaints policy expressly states:</p> <p>“If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, then an explanation should be provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman”.</p> <p>Complaint exclusion letters are part of a suite of template letters. These letters provide clear information and guidance on the</p>

				tenants right to contact the Housing Ombudsman and provides the contact details for the organisation.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Lancaster City Council – Council Housing’s Customer Care Page Lancaster City Council - Council Housing - Customer Care Webpage	Our customer care page expressly states: “Council Housing will always accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason no to do so. However, when assessing whether to treat a contact as a complaint or not. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and consideration may be given”.

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	Lancaster City Council – Council Housing’s Customer Care Page Lancaster City Council - Council Housing - Customer Care Webpage Council Housing – Reasonable Adjustments Policy	Our customer care page expressly states: “Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If you prefer to talk to someone in person, a meeting can be arranged and a friend, relative or other representative

				<p>can come with you if you wish.”</p> <p>Lancaster City Council’s Council Housing service has a comprehensive Reasonable Adjustments policy that outlines the organisation’s commitment to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. This policy is a public facing document that can be easily found on the Council Housing webpage.</p>
3.2	<p>Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.</p>	Yes	<p>Lancaster City Council – Council Housing’s Customer Care Page</p> <p>Lancaster City Council - Council Housing - Customer Care Webpage</p>	<p>Our customer care page expressly states:</p> <p>“Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If you prefer to talk to someone in person, a meeting can be arranged and a friend, relative or other representative can come with you if you wish.”</p> <p>Training provided for all staff to recognise and effectively handle complaints.</p>
3.3	<p>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</p>	Yes	<p>Lancaster City Council – Council Housing’s Customer Care Page</p> <p>Lancaster City Council - Council Housing - Customer Care Webpage</p>	<p>Our web page outlines that complaints are useful feedback that allows our service to identify areas for improvement.</p>

	potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.			
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Our policy is easily found on our wider council webpage. It clearly defines the two stage complaints process, what occurs at each of these stages and the timeframes involved. We also have regular social media posts and newsletter articles that direct tenants to our complaints policy.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our policy states that it will be available on the council's main website and the Council Housing specific page.</p> <p>The council will regularly promote the policy and the complaints process through available media channels (social media, newsletters etc.)</p> <p>It goes on to provide information about how to report a concern to the housing ombudsman service.</p> <p>The service's Complaint Policy outlines that the policy and the complaints process will be regularly promoted through available media channels (social</p>

				<p>media, newsletters etc.) This is inclusive of the Ombudsman and the Complaint Handling Code.</p> <p>The policy also provides information about the Ombudsman Service and the Code.</p>
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	The Complaints procedure outlines that; a complaint can be made on behalf of the service user by a councillor, advice worker, solicitor or other third party. However, a third party consent form must be completed.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	The Complaints policy provides clear information on how a resident can access the Ombudsman service. This is also included in our complaint response letters

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		<p>Council Housing has a named Complaints Officer with the required responsibility, and a team of additional officers who act as complaint handlers and complaint administrators. These Officers receive clear guidance and appropriate training to carry out this role.</p> <p>The Complaints Officer for council housing has overall responsibility for this area of work, and acts as liaison with the Housing Ombudsman and reports via the organisations governance structures (Cabinet, Portfolio Holder, additional groups and committees).</p>
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		<p>The 'complaints officer' function is undertaken by the Neighbourhoods and Support Services Manager who is a senior manager in the housing team who has access to staff of all levels.</p> <p>Due to their seniority within the organisation, they also have the</p>

				authority and autonomy to resolve disputes.
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	Induction Handbook	<p>All front-line staff have received complaint handling training which is refreshed on a biennial basis. In addition to this Complaints Training is part of the induction process for new starters within the service.</p> <p>Learning is recorded on all complaints and a monthly Complaint Learning meeting is held between managers. Learning is published bit externally and to staff internally.</p>

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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Lancaster City Council has a single complaints policy. This policy covers all service areas within the organisation. Residents will never be treated differently if they choose to raise a complaint as we view this as an opportunity for learning and development.
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Whilst Lancaster City Council promotes a culture that resolves complaints early, we operate a

	appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.			two stage complaints process with no additional named stages.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Lancaster City Council operate a two stage complaints process with no additional named stages.
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		Lancaster City Council operate a two stage complaints process with no additional named stages, any complaint response that is handled by a third party remains under the scope of our two stage complaints process and residents are not expected to go through two complaints processes. In any circumstances we would not request a third party to complete a response on our behalf, information would be gained from the third party and included in a response letter from a named Lancaster City Council member of staff.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes		Any complaint response that is handled by a third party remains under the scope of our complaints policy and therefore in line with the Ombudsman Code of practice. In any circumstances we would not

				request a third party to complete a response on our behalf, information would be gained from the third party and included in a response letter from a named Lancaster City Council member of staff.
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	Stage 1 and 2 Acknowledgement Letters	All acknowledgement letters sent out to residents who have raised a complaint, include a full breakdown of the landlords understanding of the complaint, as well as the outcomes/remedies that the resident is seeking. In any cases where this information is not known, staff are advised to contact the resident for further clarification.
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	Stage 1 and 2 Acknowledgement Letters	In the event that an aspect of the complaint raised is not part of the landlords responsibility and therefore will not be investigated, the acknowledgement letter will clarify this as such and wherever possible signpost the resident to the correct body.
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;	Yes	Council Code of Conduct	The service meets the requirements of provision 5.8 through the following means:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. This is covered in our inhouse complaint training carried out biennially. b. As part of our process staff are encouraged to contact the complainant to ensure that they are able to fairly set out their position. c. The Council's Code of Conduct outlines the expectations around potential conflict of interests and the measures taken to avoid or minimise these situations. d. Responding officers are skilled and experienced members of staff. Who have received adequate training and are able to consider 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	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	Section 6. timescales outlined that in exceptional circumstances, cases may need additional time to fully investigate and to arrange remedial action.

				In these cases, staff are advised to agree suitable timescales with the complainant and ensure they are regularly updated on progress.
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	Council Housing Reasonable Adjustment Policy	Council Housing has a comprehensive reasonable adjustments policy that outlines our commitment to ensuring our service is accessible to all.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	We will never refuse to escalate a complaint without a valid reason to do so. in cases where we would refuse to escalate a complaint to the second stage of our process, we would provide the complainant with a letter that clearly sets out the reasons for refusal in line with Section 2 of the Ombudsman code.
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,	Yes	Granicus record keeping	Lancaster City Council use Granicus to record all cases. Using this platform a full record of the complaint can be kept, including actions and outcomes. All details of the complaint itself,

	and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.			<p>including the date received, the complaint definition and outcomes being sought.</p> <p>It also allows the service to record the correspondence with the tenants such as letters, emails etc.</p> <p>As this is a new IT system a record is kept on a tracker to ensure excellent record keeping during this transitional period.</p>
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our policy outlines that we will put things right when they have gone wrong, that we will inform complainants of the actions it will take or intends to take to put things right.</p> <p>This is not stage dependent and appropriate remedies will be taken at either stage of the complaint.</p>
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	<p>Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy</p> <p>Council Housing – Unacceptable Behaviour Policy</p>	Covered in Section 10 of the Policy Document.

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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy Council Housing – Unacceptable Behaviour Policy	<p>Our Complaints policy states in Section 10:</p> <p>“The council welcomes comments but will not tolerate deceitful, abusive, offensive, threatening or other forms of unacceptable behaviour from complainants and will take appropriate and proportionate action should such circumstances arise.”</p> <p>The Council Housing service also has an Unacceptable behaviour policy that outlines what actions can be taken if a resident displays behaviour that is unacceptable to staff including verbal abuse, threats of violence etc. Actions can include limiting contact, however the policy states that this will always be a proportionate response.</p>
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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	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	<p>Our complaint handling process makes every effort to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, having due regard to the complexity of the case and any urgent issues are dealt with in a timely manner.</p> <p>We hold a weekly complaints huddle meeting that reviews current complaints, and explores how these cases can be resolved quickly and which require further investigation.</p> <p>Staff are advised to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity, even if this means arranging actions before the complaint response is provided.</p> <p>When the complaint handler picks up a case complaint wher possible contact should be made with the complainant immediately to assess any</p>

				<p>complexity or vulnerability with the case, and clarify points where appropriate.</p> <p>Complex cases are passed to the complaint manager to assess appropriate case handler to carry out investigation across multiple teams</p>
6.2	<p>Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council - Complaints Policy	<p>All timescales are set out in Section 6. Which clearly states:</p> <p>The officer assigned to investigate and address the complaint must establish contact with the complainant to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue/s. It also adds that complaints should be acknowledged and logged at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure within 5 working days of the complaint being received</p>
6.3	<p>Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council - Complaints Policy	<p>Section 6 of the complaints policy for Lancaster City Council outlines 'The Officer responding to the complaint must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being received'.</p>

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	Lancaster City Council - Complaints Policy Stage 1 Extension Letter (10 days) Template	Lancaster City Council's complaints policy states: Should an extension to the response timescale be required, the Officer responding to the complaint will inform the complainant of the expected timescale for response, the reasoning for the delay will be clearly explained and the contact details for the relevant ombudsman service. The length of the extension is at the discretion of the council but will not exceed 10 working days without good reason. the council has a Stage 1 Extension Letter Template that meets the criteria set out in this provision.
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	Stage 1 Extension Letter (10 days) Template	If a complaint requires an extension. The staff member responding to the complaint will also provide the complainant with the Housing Ombudsman details. Response letters to complainants also include details with how a resident can

				<p>contact the Housing Ombudsman.</p> <p>The service also has a extension letter for Stage 1 complaints that provides the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.</p>
6.6	<p>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.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	<p>The complaint response is sent to the resident when the answer to complaint is known.</p> <p>If there should be any outstanding actions, these will be listed within the written response with target/arranged dates.</p> <p>Outstanding actions are tracked within the system until they are completed.</p>
6.7	<p>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.</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	<p>Lancaster City Council has adopted the Ombudsman’s best practice letter template for all complaint responses.</p> <p>Because of this our complaints responses do address all points raised and provide clear reasons for the decisions made.</p>
6.8	<p>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</p>	Yes	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	<p>Our staff guidance document states the following regarding additional complaints:</p>

	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.			“If the allegations are not closely linked to the matters under investigation the complainant should be told that these will need to be pursued as a new complaint. All additional allegations should be responded to within 5 working days”.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes	Response Letter Template.	Lancaster City Council uses a letter template for all responses. In this template all items A) to G) are included.

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	Response Letter Template	Letters to stage one complainants outline that if the resident is dissatisfied with the response provided, then they should contact the organisation

				and the complaint will be reviewed at Stage 2.
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	Lancaster City Council - Complaints Policy	All timescales are set out in Section 6. Which clearly states: “Requests for stage 2 should be acknowledged and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received”.
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	Lancaster City Council – Guidance on Complaints.	Residents are not required to provide reasoning for their request of an escalation to stage 2 of our complaint handling procedure. Where necessary complaint handlers will seek additional information as to why the resident was not satisfied with the stage 1 response. However this is to improve our understanding and not a prerequisite of a stage 2 consideration.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	The Council’s complaint policy outlines that a stage 2 complaint will be considered by a Chief Officer (ordinarily outside of the service area being complained about), in the event the

				complaint is about a Chief Officer it will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	The standards for stage 2 complaints are detailed within the complaints policy. The standard for responding to a stage 2 complaint is 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 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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy Stage 2 Extension Letter (20 days) Template	Lancaster City Council's complaint policy outlines all guidance on extensions at stage two. It highlights that although extensions are at the discretion of the landlord, they cannot exceed 20 working days without good reason. The service also has a extension letter for Stage 2 complaints. Which meets the requirements of this provision.
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	Extension Letter Templates	All letters sent to residents as part of our complaint handling procedure include details of how to contact the housing ombudsman. This includes any written correspondence relating to timescale extensions. The service also has a extension letter for Stage 2 complaints.

				Which meets the requirements of this provision.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>The complaint response is sent to the resident when the answer to complaint is known.</p> <p>If there should be any outstanding actions, these will be listed within the written response with target/arranged dates.</p> <p>Outstanding actions are tracked within the system until they are completed.</p>
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Lancaster City Council has adopted the Ombudsman's best practice letter template for all complaint responses.</p> <p>Because of this our complaints responses do address all points raised and provide clear reasons for the decisions made.</p>
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; 	Yes	Response Letter Templates	Lancaster City Council uses a letter template for all responses. In this template all items A) to G) are included.

	<p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</p>			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Stage 2 Response letter Template.	Lancaster City Council operates a two stage complaints process, as such any stage 2 response sent to a resident is the final response.

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints procedure is in place to effectively resolve disputes, by identifying what has gone wrong and the intended actions to put things right.</p> <p>Our complaints response letters includes opportunity for responding officers to outline how the council plans to put things right. This can include all options includes in the code requirement 7.1</p>

7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Lancaster City Council Complaints Policy	Lancaster City Council always try to ensure the remedies offered reflect the impact on the resident. We also wherever possible try to ascertain what outcome the resident is seeking as part of the complaints process.
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	Response Letter Templates	<p>Response letters sent to the resident will always clearly set out what actions will be taken as part of the remedy, wherever known this will include the timescales of said actions and the officer who will be carrying these out.</p> <p>In cases where appropriate outstanding actions, appointments, repairs will be made in agreement with the resident. All remedies will be processed through to completion and note of these can be recorded on the councils complaints tracker (Granicus).</p>
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		We are committed to handling complaints in the best possible manner. We refer to the Ombudsman's guidance when deciding upon remedies for our complaint cases.

				<p>In instances where the ombudsman contacts Council Housing directly to issue guidance on particular cases, we will always take account of the guidance offered to us.</p> <p>A compensation policy is in development to be published in 2024-25 to support this.</p>
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Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Yes	Annual Complaints Report 2023-24	<p>Lancaster City Council's Council Housing Team have produced an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny.</p> <p>The report includes this annual self assessment as an addendum ensuring that the complaintspolicy remains in line with its requirements. Both qualitative and quantative analysis of our performance is included, including the types and nature of complaints received.</p> <p>It also includes learning from the previous years complaints and service improvements to be focused upon in the coming 12 months</p> <p>The report includes findings of non-compliance and investigations carried out by the Housing Ombudsman. At the time of writing – the severe</p>

				maladministration finding has not yet been published by the Housing Ombudsman therefore we are unable to provide a link to this document.
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	Council Website	Report scheduled at 4 th June 2024 Cabinet. Documents relating to this and the Council's response will be published on our complaints section of our website.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Self-Assessment 2024	Although Lancaster City Council is not currently undertaking any mergers, restructures, or changes in procedures. We are committed to doing so in the event of such.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		Lancaster City Council's Council Housing Service is committed to carrying out a review and update of our self-assessment should we be 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 must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes		Should such an incident/situation occur and as a landlord we were unable to comply with the Code. Council Housing would be committed to informing the Ombudsman and the affected complainants and publish this on our website with

				the appropriate timescales for the resuming of the service.
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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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Guidance	Lancaster City Council is committed to learning from residents' complaints and looking beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint. We hold regular review of the complaints we have received to identify service failures and use this learning to consider whether service improvements need to be made as a result.
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	Lancaster City Council Complaints Guidance	Lancaster City Council's Council Housing Service recognises the positive impact complaints have on future service delivery, which is supported through the investigation and learning process. Our regular complaint learning sessions use complaints as a source of important intelligence to identify wider issues in the service and helps us to implement positive changes in our service delivery where necessary.

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	Quarterly Learning and Service Improvement Report.	<p>Staff and residents will receive a quarterly learning and improvement report that outlines the wider learning and related service improvements.</p> <p>The Council Housing Advisory Group (Councillors, Tenants, Community Partners) will also receive this report as part of a quarterly meeting.</p> <p>The Cabinet (as part of the council governance) will receive this learning and service improvement report on a quarterly basis also.</p> <p>This reporting process will commence in Q1 of the 2024-25 financial year.</p>
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		<p>The Neighbourhoods & Support Services Manager has accountability for complaints handling.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Policy and Performance Officer this role also assesses any themes or trends to identify potential system issues.</p>
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to	Yes		An elected member of the

	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').			Cabinet has been appointed to have overall responsibility for complaints for 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		The MRC receives regular updates of the landlords performance in relation to complaints. It is the MRCs responsibility to convey this information to the wider elected council. The Lead Member sits on the Council Housing Advisory Group.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quaterly Complaints Reports • Complaint Cabinet Reports • Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report 	Lancaster City Council's Council Housings Complaints Report 2023-24 will incorporate all the required elements of Provision 9.7 and will be published both on the Committee pages of the Council's website and on the Complaints pages. This self-assessment will be updated to reflect this measure on publication of the Annual Complaints 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:	Yes	Service Improvement Plan TSM Action Plan	Our organisation works collaboratively with other services.

	<p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>			<p>One of our core values is 'being accountable', as so we take responsibility for failures as a collective, rather than promoting a blame culture.</p> <p>We are committed to acting within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set out by the Ombudsman.</p>
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