

# COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

## Housing Service

Planning, Performance and Involvement Team

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# Introduction

We aim to deliver high quality services, but we know that sometimes things go wrong and that you might not always be satisfied with our services. If that happens, you can make a complaint and we will deal with that complaint as fairly, effectively and promptly as we can.

When dealing with housing-related complaints from our tenants or leaseholders, we follow the Housing Ombudsman's **Complaints Handling Code**. This sets out how landlords are expected to deal with and learn from complaints, and it is a statutory requirement for all social housing landlords to abide by the Code.

You can find out more about the Housing Ombudsman and the Code here: [Home | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Each year, we assess ourselves against the Code to ensure that we are compliant, and that we are handling complaints as fairly and as effectively as we can. You can see a copy of our latest self-assessment here: [Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#) (It is available on this webpage as a downloadable document).

This report accompanies the self-assessment and covers three main topics:

- How well we deal with complaints
- Any issues the Housing Ombudsman has found in how we deal with complaints
- What service improvements we have made by learning from complaints

If you have any questions about this report, or any comments on how we deal with complaints, please contact us at [GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk)

## What were the most common complaints last year?

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, we received a total of **2,708** complaints (Stage 1 and Stage 2 combined) from tenants and leaseholders. This was a decrease of almost 25% from the previous year's total of **3671**.

The service areas which most frequently received complaints were Responsive Repairs, Neighbourhood Teams, Planned Repairs, Working at Heights (scaffolding, etc) and Gas Servicing. The most common reason for complaints is poor customer service.

The Housing Ombudsman says that "Receiving a high volume of complaints is not necessarily indicative of a failing. Rather it could indicate the complaints process is accessible, the organisation is open and transparent, and our citizens feel they can complain and believe there is value in doing so".

We treat all complaints as an opportunity to learn from feedback, and to improve the services we deliver to our tenants and leaseholders.

## How quickly do we deal with complaints?

The Housing Ombudsman expects us to aim to respond to Stage One complaints within a total of 15 working days (5 days to acknowledge the complaint, then a further 10 days after the acknowledgement to fully respond).

If a customer isn't happy with our initial response to their complaint, they can ask for it to be reviewed by a more senior manager. These are classed as Stage 2 complaints. We have 20 working days to carry out the review and send a final response to the complaint.

Whilst we work hard to respond within these timescales, we don't always meet them. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, we responded to **64% of Stage One complaints** within the Housing Ombudsman's timescales. This is a very slight improvement from 63% in the previous year but is still well below our target.

Only **22% of Stage 2 complaint reviews** were carried out and completed within the required 20 working days, which is less than half of last year's figure of 47%.

These figures are disappointing, and we know these delays in responding to your complaints mean that you are having to wait too long for your issues to be resolved.

We have very recently upgraded the system we use to manage complaints. These improvements will give us better and more accurate information about complaints, which in turn will mean managers can manage complaints performance in their teams more easily.

A 'Complaints Improvement Plan' will be implemented, and monitored by senior managers and Elected Members. Once agreed, this plan will be shared with tenants through our bulletins and Tenant Panels. We will keep you updated on our progress against the Plan, and share complaints performance more frequently with you.

The Plan will include:

- More dedicated staff time for managing open complaints and working directly with managers to resolve them quickly and effectively.
- More frequent reports to senior managers about our complaints performance.
- Senior managers challenging teams where performance is poor, and taking steps directly with these teams to make improvements.
- Better sharing of the learning from Housing Ombudsman determinations and recommendations.
- An internal council-wide communications campaign to improve awareness of and compliance with the complaints policy.

We really hope that in our next annual self-assessment in 2026 we are reporting much-improved figures, and will be doing everything we can over the next 12 months to make sure we do.

## How satisfied are our tenants with how we have handled their complaints?

Every month, an external partner organisation called Viewpoint undertake telephone satisfaction surveys with a random sample of our tenants. **350 surveys** are done every month and as part of this, tenants are asked if they have made a complaint to us in the last 12 months. The percentage of those who told us they had raised a complaint is **25%**.

Those that say they have made a complaint are then asked how satisfied they are with how we handled that complaint: they are also invited to provide further comments if they respond that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, **34%** of respondents said they were satisfied with our complaint handling. Whilst still a low score, this is an increase of 9% from the year before.

This is one of the strongest areas of improvement in tenant satisfaction across all topics that our survey questions cover. Although complaint handling remains our lowest tenant satisfaction score, the substantial improvement since last year suggests that changes made in our complaint handling processes are making a positive difference to our tenants.

Our satisfaction score of 34% also compares well to the complaints satisfaction scores for other similar-sized landlords. Nationally, the average score for larger landlords was just 29%, so ours is significantly higher and this something we want to build on for the next 12 months.

## Are there any complaints which we have rejected?

Very occasionally, there may be a complaint made to us by a tenant which we are not able to deal with as a complaint or which falls outside the scope of the complaints policy. Examples include:

- First requests for a service (eg. first-time request for a repair)
- Issues which the Council is not responsible for (eg. buses running late)
- Where there is a formal appeals process to deal with the issue (eg. Housing Benefit claims)
- Situations where there are safeguarding issues (as there is a separate procedure which must be followed)
- Where we receive the same complaint from the same customer and have already fully investigated and responded to it

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, we rejected a total of 58 complaints. 53 were actually first requests for service and so were dealt with as appropriate by the relevant service. The remaining 5 were rejected because the issue had already been fully investigated and responded to previously.

Whenever we cannot accept a complaint we will always explain to the customer the reasons for this.

## What does the Housing Ombudsman think of how we handle complaints?

If tenants are not happy with how we have handled their complaint, they can refer it to the Housing Ombudsman and ask for it to be reviewed by them. This can result in the Housing Ombudsman telling us that we have done something wrong in how we handled the tenant's complaint or delivered a service, and giving us recommendations or instructions for how we should put things right. They may also review the case and decide that we dealt with the complaint satisfactorily and that there is no further action to be taken.

The Housing Ombudsman publishes annual performance reports about individual social landlords, and the latest reports can be viewed here: [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) To find their latest report about us, type "Sheffield City Council" into the 'search by name' box.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the Housing Ombudsman determined **11 complaints** from our tenants, and issued **25 individual complaints findings** in respect of these complaints (a single complaint can result in a number of findings). These findings are split across the different categories as follows:

Category of finding	Explanation (as provided by the Housing Ombudsman)	No. of these in 24/25
No maladministration	No failure by the Landlord was found	3
Service failure	A minor failure by the Landlord in the service it provided, which was not appropriately acknowledged or fully put right	4
Maladministration	A failure which adversely affected the resident and which the Landlord has failed to acknowledge or has made no attempt to properly put things right	9
Severe maladministration	A failure which had a significant impact on the resident. The circumstances for maladministration apply and the redress needed to put things right is substantial	6
Redress	When there is evidence of maladministration, but the landlord has identified and	1

	acknowledged this prior to the Ombudsman's formal investigation and has, on its own initiative, taken steps and/or made an offer of compensation, that puts things right.	
Outside jurisdiction	The complaint will not or cannot be considered by the Ombudsman	2

In the above findings, the most common areas in which the Housing Ombudsman found failures were property condition, handling of Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) cases and complaints handling.

The Ombudsman has also reviewed the annual complaints self-assessment and report which we submitted last year. They commended us for our ***“well-structured policy and clear commitment to effective complaint handling.”***

As part of the review, the Ombudsman also gave us seven recommendations for making our complaints policy even clearer and easier to understand. These are for us to update our policy to clarify that:

- Complaints submitted via a third party or representative may include an advocate, such as a friend, relative, or a representative from an external organisation.
- We will consider resident requests to make our complaints policy available in an accessible format.
- There are only two stages in the complaint process and that all complaints will be handled through this two-stage procedure.
- For Stage 1 complaint acknowledgments, the resident will receive an acknowledgment letter within 5 working days of the complaint being received.
- For Stage 2 complaints we will make clear which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for.
- For Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, if we have been unable to issue a full complaint response following the initial period and the extended timescales set out in the Code,

we will contact the resident to agree suitable intervals for being updated on the progress of the complaint.

- In addition to Stage 1 complaints, a response for Stage 2 complaints will 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. And that outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.

We really welcome the Ombudsman's feedback on our policy, and will be implementing all of these recommendations. An updated complaints policy will be shared with tenants in October, incorporating all of the changes the Ombudsman has recommended.

These updates will also be reflected in updated guidance and training for staff.

## What have we learned from complaints?

It is very important that we directly address a tenant's complaint and put things right for that tenant. It is also very important that we learn from that complaint on a wider basis and where necessary make changes to how we do things. This means that our services for all tenants improve as a result of individual complaints made to us.

Once a complaint has been fully investigated and a response sent to the tenant, the investigating manager then considers what we can learn from that complaint. Service improvements are then agreed and put into practice based on what we have learned.

These improvements can range from relatively small changes to processes or to how an individual team works, to larger-scale service wide changes.

Senior managers also look at the learning from complaints to identify any common themes or issues, so that service-wide improvements at a higher level can be made where necessary. We also share the

Below are some examples of improvements made as a result of learning from your complaints:



### **New Repairs Policy**

Information from complaints told us that we hadn't been clear enough with our tenants about the responsibilities of tenants and the Council in carrying out repairs.

We learned from this, and in response produced a new Repairs Policy and accompanying leaflet to make it clearer to tenants and to give them something simple to refer back to when unsure of who is responsible for a repair.

The Repairs Policy and leaflet were launched in July and shared with tenants via bulletins and on our social media.

### **New Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy and Good Neighbour Guide**

We knew from feedback from ASB complainants that tenants needed more clarification about our timescales for dealing with ASB issues, more information about how ASB can be dealt with and clarity on the ASB process as a whole.

This feedback has helped us shape the development of our new ASB Policy, and a new ASB handbook. These give lots of information about our ASB process - including our commitments to our tenants, tenants' responsibilities and about how to report ASB.

We have also created a Good Neighbour guide which covers a variety of topics, not just ASB, to help us all work together to make Sheffield a community where everyone feels safe and can live in homes they are proud of.

These were launched in summer 2024, promoted through our usual tenant communication channels, made available on our website and in print in our area offices.

### **Widening the scope of the Handy-Person Service**

Our Handy-Person Service can be used by older or disabled tenants to help with small DIY jobs in their homes which would normally be the responsibility of the tenant.

We received a complaint from a tenant who, in response to their ASB issues, had been provided with additional security equipment to help them feel safer in their home. However, the tenant lacked the tools and confidence to install this equipment.

It was agreed that, in this instance, the Handy-Person Service could be used to install the equipment, even though the tenant didn't meet the usual older / disabled criteria.

As a result of this, there was a wider decision taken that the Handy-Person Service could be used across the city to assist a wider range of vulnerable tenants, especially where ASB, domestic abuse or safety is a factor.

## Management of litter and fly-tipping on our estates

We had received negative feedback from local residents (and feedback from a tenants Estate Walkabout) about fly-tipping, litter and general untidiness in the Uttley area of our East Neighbourhood.

In response, it was agreed that the East Neighbourhood team would organise a 'clean-up day' for the area. The team worked with local volunteers, the local church, the Local Area Committee, local community groups and the Council's Environmental Services department.

In total, 10 tonnes of rubbish were removed from the area and tenants commented on what a huge uplift had been given to the area as a result. This clearly works as an approach, and so we held similar events (and have more planned) – both in the East Neighbourhood and also in other Neighbourhoods across the city.

## Further information

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about anything in this report, or would like further information about how we handle complaints, please contact us at

[GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk) or by calling us on 0114 2930000.

You can also find more information about our complaints policy by visiting our website:

[Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read our report.

## 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.

### **Please note:**

Information about how we handle complaints is published on our website here:

[Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#)

On this website page are two important documents which are referred to throughout this self-assessment. These are our Corporate Complaints Handling Policy ("Policy") and our Corporate Complaints Handling Procedure ("Procedure").

Specific sections within these documents are referred to below as evidence of our compliance with the Code. These sections are numbered – eg "Policy 3.1." Please use the above website link if you wish to view any of these sections.

**If there is any other information mentioned in this document which you would like to know more about or see examples of, please feel free to email us and we will provide any additional information that we can: [GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk)**

## 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	Our definition complies  Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy 1.2</li></ul>	
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	We are compliant.  Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy 1.3, 1.4, 1.6</li></ul>	We are compliant with this requirement, but in its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to “...clarify that complaints submitted via a third party or representative may include an advocate, such as a friend, relative, or a representative from an external organisation”.  From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service	Yes	We are compliant.  Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy 1.5, 1.7</li></ul>	

	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.			
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 1.7</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>Automated responses for completed text surveys signpost to complaints info, and this info is also part of our telephone surveys. There is also a link to complaints information on our Tenant Engagement web page.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 1.8</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Tenant Engagement web page: <u><a href="https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-landing-page">https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-landing-page</a></u></a></li> </ul>	

## 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	Our policy is clear that we will deal with all complaints through the agreed process unless certain conditions apply.  Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy 2.2-2.3, 2.8 – 2.14</li></ul>	
Page 14 2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.</li><li>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.</li><li>Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.</li></ul>	Yes	Our policy is clear on what circumstances would mean that a matter would not be considered as a complaint.  Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy 2.8 – 2.14</li></ul>	
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	Yes	We are compliant.  Evidence:	

	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.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 2.10</li> </ul>	
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>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 2.11</li> </ul>	
Page 15 2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	<p>Complaints are always dealt with on their own merits, and are only not accepted as complaints when one or more of the reasons outlined in the Policy applies.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 2.8 – 2.14</li> </ul>	

### Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	<p>Customers can make a complaint through our website (on-line form), by email, by telephone, in writing or in person. We do not require customers to make their complaint in writing.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.1, 3.2</a></li> </ul> <p>Our policy is clear that we will consider and deliver on our duties under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.1</a></li> </ul>	
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	<p>We are compliant. All housing staff are required to undertake mandatory e-learning on the complaints process.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.2</a></li> <li>• List of training modules / courses available to all staff:</li> </ul>	



			 <p>Screenshot of training courses.jpg</p>	
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	We welcome complaints, our complaints process is well-publicised (as evidenced below) and we have a significant number of complaints every month.	
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	<p>We are compliant. The complaints policy and process are published on the website and cover all the required elements.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.3, 3.4</a></li> <li>• Webpage: <a href="#">Complain about the Council Housing Service   Sheffield City Council</a></li> </ul>	<p>We are compliant with this requirement, but in its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to clarify that we "...will consider resident requests to make our complaints policy available in an accessible format".</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.</p>
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.4, 3.6</a></li> </ul>	
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.5</a></li> </ul>	
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the	Yes	Complaints information is clearly published on the website, and all	

Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.

complaints correspondence to customers references the Housing Ombudsman.

Evidence:

- Policy 3.6
- Webpage: [Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#)
- Housing Factsheet sent with all complaints responses:



Housing  
Factsheet.docx

## 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>SCC has designated Complaints Managers and a specific team – the Corporate Feedback &amp; Complaints Team – assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the relevant Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). In addition, there are a number of Complaints Investigating/ Accountable Managers in the Housing Service who are responsible for investigating and responding to individual complaints.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure pages 5-7</a></li> </ul>	
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>Our Complaints Officers have all of this, and we commit to this in our policy.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 4.3</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>Our CRM system is configured to support us to capture the learning gained from complaints. Performance reports are circulated to Directors to enable them to identify key issues / trends, etc.</p> <p>All staff are offered training on complaints – this training emphasises that complaints are valuable feedback to be learned from, and that complaint handling is a key priority.</p>	

			Every team / service has at least one Investigating Manager and one Accountable Officer – larger teams have more – to ensure that complaints can be handled effectively.	
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## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	<p>We are compliant</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy, specifically 5.1</li> </ul>	
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.	No	<p>We focus on early and local resolution and wherever possible seek to resolve the complaint at the first point of contact or within 5 working days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence: Policy 5.2</li> <li>Webpage: <a href="#">Complain about the Council Housing Service   Sheffield City Council</a></li> </ul> <p>However, as per the Ombudsman's comments to the right, our policy is confusing in regards to how many stages there are to our process and</p>	<p>In its review of our 2024 self-assessment, the Ombudsman stated that our policy is unclear on how many stages we have in our complaints process.</p> <p>Particularly, it felt that parts of our policy give the misleading impression that we have an additional 'early resolution' stage and that complaints responded to quickly do not follow the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.</p> <p>Our complaints policy must have only 2 stages to be compliant with the Ombudsman requirements, and all complaints must be dealt with using the same process.</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification, and any ambiguity will be</p>

			more clarity on this is needed to be fully compliant.	removed. Procedures and staff training will also be updated to reflect this clarification.
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.	No	<p>Our process is compliant and only has 2 clear stages.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 5.3</li> </ul> <p>As per the comments above, whilst our process does only have two stages, the wording on the policy is unclear and misleading. Amendments to the wording will be made to ensure that we are fully compliant with this element.</p>	
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	<p>We handle tenant complaints directly and don't pass these on to our contractors or partners to deal with. Customers are <b>not</b> expected to go through two complaints processes.</p> <p>Where a complaint is made to a contractor or party, this will be dealt with in line with the</p>	

			<p>Council's complaints policy.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Policy 1.4</p>	
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	<p>As per info above.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Policy 5.3</p>	
Page 22  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	<p>Our template for complaints acknowledgements include this information.</p> <p>Investigating Managers are expected to contact the customer from the start to understand the complaint and clarify any points of uncertainty.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedure page 10</li> <li>Letter templates, example:</li> </ul> <p> Stage 1 Acknowledgement ter</p>	<p>In its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to clarify that for Stage 1 complaints, the resident will receive an acknowledgment letter within 5 working days of the complaint being received.</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.</p>
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are,	Yes	As above	In its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to clarify that in our Stage 2

	and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.			<p>acknowledgements we will make clear which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for.</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.</p>
Page 23 5.8	<p>At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;</li> <li>give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;</li> <li>take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</li> <li>consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</li> </ol>	Yes	<p>Our complaints process sets out the approach complaints handlers are expected to take, and this is reinforced in the training which all Investigating and Accountable Managers must undertake. It incorporates all of this.</p> <p>It is also outlined in our policy.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 1.9</li> <li>Complaints Procedure page 5-7</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 1.9</li> </ul>	<p>Our policy is compliant with this requirement, but in its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to clarify "...that for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, if we have been unable to issue a full complaint response following the initial period and the extended timescales set out in the Code, we will contact the resident to agree suitable intervals for</p>

				<p>being updated on the progress of the complaint”.</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.</p>
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 3.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 16</a></li> </ul>	
Page 24 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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 5.4</a></li> </ul>	
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	<p>We are compliant. All complaints are recorded on the CRM system, on which all details of a complaint are stored – including the original complaint, all related correspondence and other supporting documentation.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 5.2, 5.5</a></li> </ul>	




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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 5.6</a></li> </ul>	
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>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 5.7, Section 14</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy Section 14</a></li> </ul>	

## 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	<p>We focus on early and local resolution and wherever possible seek to resolve the complaint at the first point of contact or within 5 working days.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 5.2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 9</a></li> </ul>	
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <b><u>within five working days of the complaint being received</u></b> .	Yes	<p>Our policy and process are compliant. From April 2024, we have introduced systems changes to help ensure that the date of acknowledgement is properly recorded, and all relevant staff reminded of how to do this.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.1.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 10</a></li> </ul>	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <b><u>within 10 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.1.2</a></li> </ul>	
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	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p>	

	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.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.3</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.4</li> <li>Procedure page 10</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.6</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.7</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.5</li> </ul>	

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"> <li>a. the complaint stage;</li> <li>b. the complaint definition;</li> <li>c. the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>We are compliant, and our template for response letters includes all of this.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 1.9, 6.1.7</a></li> <li>• Letter template for Stage 1 responses:</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">   STAGE 1  Investigation Respons </div>	
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## Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 11</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>Our policy and process are compliant. From April 2024, we have introduced systems changes to help ensure that the date of acknowledgement is properly recorded, and all relevant staff reminded of how to do this.</p> <p>Evidence:</p>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.3</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 10</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.4</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 11</a></li> </ul>	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.7</a></li> </ul>	
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <b><u>within 20 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.8</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.9</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.10</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 12</a></li> </ul>	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p>	In its review of our 2024 annual self-assessment, the Ombudsman has asked us to amend our policy to clarify that, in

	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.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy 6.1.6</li> </ul>	<p>addition to Stage 1 complaints, a response for Stage 2 complaints will 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. And that outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.</p> <p>From September 2025 our policy will be updated with additional wording to give this clarification.</p>
Page 30 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	<p>Our letter templates for Stage 2 responses cover these points.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter template for Stage 2 responses (see box below)</li> </ul>	
6.19	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the complaint stage;</li> <li>the complaint definition;</li> <li>the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman</li> </ol>	Yes	<p>Our letter templates for Stage 2 responses cover these points.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter template for Stage 2 responses:</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1160 1257 1218 1321" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Stage%202%20response%20template.docx</p>	

	Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	<p>Our Policy confirms that we have no further stages, and signposts to the Ombudsman if the customer wishes to take it further.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 6.2.1</a></li> </ul>	

## Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
<div>Page 31</div> <div>7.1</div>	<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"> <li>• Apologising;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> <li>• Changing policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 7.1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 20</a></li> </ul>	

7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 7.2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure page 20</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 7.3</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure section 5</a></li> </ul>	
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 7.4</a></li> </ul>	



## Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.</li> <li>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;</li> <li>any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</li> <li>the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</li> <li>any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</li> <li>any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</li> </ol>	Yes	<p>We are compliant</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Complain about the Council Housing Service   Sheffield City Council</a> – the annual report and self assessment are attached as downloadable documents on this page</li> <li>Policy 8.1</li> </ul>	<i>These docs to be added to this web page once the assessment and annual report have been approved</i>
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	Yes	Our annual complaints report is shared with the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (SRPC) and published on our website, along with SRPC's response to it.	

	response to the report must be published alongside this.		<p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Complain about the Council Housing Service   Sheffield City Council</a> – the annual report is attached as a downloadable document on this page, and the Governing Body's response is included within the report.</li> </ul>	
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	We would do this if those circumstances applied	
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	We would do this if the Ombudsman requested it	
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	We would do this if required.	

## 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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.1</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.2</a></li> </ul>	
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	<p>We are compliant. Examples of 'You Said We Did' improvements have been publicised in our tenant "You Said We Did" bulletin.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.3</a></li> <li>• Example of tenant bulletin article:</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1160 1077 1220 1141" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>You Said We Did Bulletin Feb25.docx</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>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.4</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure Page 8</a></li> </ul>	

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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.5</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure Page 8</a></li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.5-9.7</a></li> </ul>	
Page 36 9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;</li> <li>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;</li> <li>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</li> <li>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy 9.7</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Complain about the Council Housing Service   Sheffield City Council</a> – the annual report is attached as a downloadable document on this page, and the Governing Body's response is included within the report.</li> </ul>	
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	<p>We are compliant.</p> <p>Evidence:</p>	

	<p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policy 4.1</li></ul>	
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