

Thurrock Council self-assessment – Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Self-assessment undertaken in June 2024.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	The definition of a complaint on our website and within the complaint's procedure is as follows: <i>"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the council, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting any individual, groups of individuals or businesses."</i>
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 a complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/others-you-can-turn-to	The council does not insist on residents using the word "complaint" for a matter to be handled as a complaint and this is covered within our procedure. The council's Complaints Team oversees this. Any complaint submitted via a third party – for example, an MP or councillor – will be handled in line with the council's

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				complaints process and this is covered within our complaints procedure. The council's Complaints Team oversees this.
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 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.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/tips-for-making-complaint	Service requests are not service failures and are recorded separately by the council. However, a failure by the council in responding to a service request and/or if a resident raises concerns with the handling of their service request, will result in the matter being recorded as a complaint by the council. Service request failures are referred to within our complaint's procedure.
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/tips-for-making-complaint	Service requests are not service failures and are recorded separately by the council. However, a failure by the council in responding to a service request and/or if a resident raises concerns with the handling of their service request, will result in the matter being recorded as a complaint by the council. Service request failures are referred to within our complaint's procedure.
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.	Yes	All Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys include the following: <i>If a resident wishes to raise a complaint, residents can be directed to either the Council's</i>	This message has been communicated to our Housing Teams to ensure that when surveys are undertaken, the person completing the survey is made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.		<i>website as follows;</i> https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview or contacting 01375 652 652.	

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	The council will accept a complaint, unless the matter falls within the exclusions as set out within the complaint's procedure.
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"> The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. 	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	Exclusions are set out within the council's complaints procedure.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 			
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>The council's complaints procedure is clear that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complainants should make their complaint within 12 months The council can refuse to accept a complaint about something that happened more than 12 months ago, but it would only do this after proper consideration of all circumstances
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>In cases where complaints are rejected, residents will be informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> of the decision and provided with an explanation of their right to take the decision to the Ombudsman <p>The above is detailed within our complaint's procedure.</p>
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	Complaints will only be excluded if they fall within the council's exclusion criteria.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				<p>In cases where complaints are rejected, residents will be informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the decision and provided with an explanation • of their right to take the decision to the Ombudsman

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/make-complaint	<p>The council's complaints procedure makes it clear that individuals can make a complaint via email, letter or web form. In addition, complaints can also be received in person and by ringing our contact centre where our staff will assist the complainant if this is the case.</p> <p>The complaints policy makes it clear that if residents need help to make a complaint, they can appoint someone to deal with it on their behalf, or if they don't have anyone to assist them, the council can help them find someone independent to speak to.</p>

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				<p>In addition to the above, the council also makes it clear to residents via complaint acknowledgment letters that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they require assistance to take forward their complaint, they can appoint a representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf • any individual representing or assisting them can accompany them at any meeting with the council, if a meeting is required to consider their complaint • if they require assistance with their complaint, but don't have anyone to help them, they can let us know and the council will share the details of independent agencies who may be able to assist <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forms part of a mandatory e-learning training course within the council. The Complaints Team has undertaken this training.</p>
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	A reminder is sent semi-annually within staff newsletters. These details are also published on the Council's intranet.	Communications are sent to staff to remind them of the complaints process and the actions for them if they receive a complaint.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>The complaints procedure is available on our website and details the stages, timeframes for responding to each stage and the escalation process.</p> <p>Our complaints procedure is also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided as a link when we respond to complaints • available as printed documents within our main Town Hall building and local libraries
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/general-complaints https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>The complaints procedure is available on the council's website, detailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how a complaint can be made • the 2-stage process • the timeframes for responding <p>The council's complaints procedure is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided as a link when we respond to complaints • available as a printed document within our main Town Hall building and local libraries

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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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>Our complaints procedure includes the following information:</p> <p>Our complaints procedure, and information on the complaints handling codes of the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided as a link when we respond to complaints • available as printed documents within our main Town Hall building and local libraries <p>The Ombudsman services may be able to help you with your complaint via their dispute support advisers. Information can be found within the websites of the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/make-complaint	<p>Our complaints procedure makes it clear that if residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need help to make a complaint, they can appoint someone to deal with it on their behalf

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • don't have anyone to assist, we can help them find someone independent to speak for them <p>In addition to the above, residents are informed of the following at the complaint acknowledgment stage:</p> <p>"If you require assistance with your complaint, but don't have anyone to help you, please let us know and we will be happy to share the details of some independent agencies who you may wish to approach for further assistance."</p>
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		<p>The council is clear within its complaints' communications – for example, acknowledgments – that the Housing Ombudsman Service may be able to assist the complainant by allowing them the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. The Ombudsman's contact details are provided to allow the complainant to make contact if required.</p> <p>Residents are also informed at complaint acknowledgment stage that they have a right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point when they have exhausted the council's complaints</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				process – this is on the basis that the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint, and affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.

Section 4: Complaint handling staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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		The council has a Complaints Team that manages this area of work.
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		The Complaints Team comprises individuals who are all trained to work on a range of complaints-related matters. Escalation processes are in place to ensure all complaints are dealt with in line with timeframes.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
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		The Complaints Team is trained in complaint handling. Learning from complaints is a key area within all complaints reporting that go to senior management and/or via Members.

Section 5: The complaint handling process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/overview	<p>A single complaints procedure is in place within the council and this is available on our website and details the stages, timeframes for responding to each stage and the escalation process.</p> <p>The complaints procedure is also communicated to individuals as part of our communications schedule (that we have in place as part of this code).</p> <p>Residents will not be treated differently if they complain and the council welcomes complaint-related feedback to improve our services.</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/general-complaints	<p>This is standard practice as a complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident and whether there are any urgent actions required. This forms part of our complaints process and the council aim to resolve all complaints as part of the stage 1 process.</p> <p>The council does not use any extra named stages, such as stage 0. All complaints are handled in line with our 2-stage process.</p>
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/general-complaints www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/housing-complaints	The council operates a 2-stage process.
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party – for example, 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		Complaints in relation to council contractors – for example, a Housing Repair Contractor – follow the council's complaints process.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes		Complaints in relation to council contractors – for example, a Housing Repair Contractor – follow the council's complaints process and will be managed in line with this code.
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		All acknowledgement letters include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the points of concern that the council considers are in scope of the complaint – and residents are given the opportunity to change this • a request to the resident, to confirm the outcome they are seeking if this is unclear
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes		This will be made clear within the complaint acknowledgement letter, as the council will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • firm up the points of concern that are in scope of the complaint • confirm any aspects of concern that they are not responsible for and provide the reasons for this
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:	Yes		Council staff who may be the subject of the complaint, will not be involved in the complaint investigation. In addition to this, any impartiality concerns and/or conflict of

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	<p>a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;</p> <p>b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;</p> <p>c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</p> <p>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</p>			<p>interest will be picked up as part of complaint escalation, as stage 2 complaints are investigated outside of the service area by the Complaints Team.</p> <p>All points of concern are identified up front by the Complaints Team. Quality checks are in place, by the Complaints Team, to ensure all points of concern have been fully responded to.</p>
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		The council aims to respond to all complaints within the timeframes set out within its procedure. If it is known that timeframes cannot be met, the Complaints Team will inform the resident of this.
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/make-complaint	<p>The complaints policy makes it clear that if residents need help to make a complaint, they can appoint someone to deal with it on their behalf, or if they don't have anyone to assist them, the council can help them find someone independent to speak to.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the council also makes it clear to residents via complaint acknowledgment letters that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> if they require assistance to take forward their complaint, they can

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				<p>appoint a representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any individual representing or assisting them can accompany them at any meeting with the council, if a meeting is required to consider their complaint • if they require assistance with their complaint, but don't have anyone to help them, they can let us know and the council will share the details of independent agencies who may be able to assist <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forms part of a mandatory e-learning training course within the council. The Complaints Team has undertaken this training.</p> <p>Records of agreed reasonable adjustments will be held within the complaints system.</p>
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		The council does not refuse complaint escalations.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each	Yes		This information is held within the complaints system.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	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.			
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/resolving-complaints	<p>The council's complaints procedure sets out a range of remedies that are considered when resolving complaints at any stage of the process.</p> <p>Remedies offered will be clear and are tracked by the Complaints Team, to ensure they are actioned by individual service areas.</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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/tips-for-making-complaint	<p>The council has an "Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable behaviour" procedure in place to manage this.</p> <p>Restrictions are assessed on a case-by-case basis and any decisions taken can be evidenced and are subject to regular reviews.</p>
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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/tips-for-making-complaint	<p>Prior to any restrictions being put in place, residents are warned beforehand that any repeat of unacceptable behaviour will result in restrictions being applied. However, at the point of applying</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				restrictions, one suitable/reasonable form of contact is always provided by the council.

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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		The council always aims to respond within 10 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 10-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the complaints Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.	Yes		Complaints received via email into the Complaints Team inbox receive an automated email acknowledgment. In addition to this, all complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and this communication includes:

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the points of concern that the council consider are in scope of the complaint – and residents are given the opportunity to change this a request to the resident, to confirm the outcome they are seeking if this is unclear
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/general-complaints	The council always aims to respond within 10 working days as a maximum.
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		The council do not extend timeframes. If the 10-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
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>The council do not extend timeframes. If the 10-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.</p> <p>Residents are informed at complaint acknowledgment stage that they have a</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
				right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point when they have exhausted the council's complaints process – this is on the basis that the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint, and affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.
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		This is standard practice and any outstanding actions and/or follow up work are logged and tracked by the Complaints Team, with updates provided to residents.
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		This is standard practice within the council.
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	Yes		This is standard practice within the council.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.			
6.9	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:</p> <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		This is standard practice within the council.

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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		This is standard practice within the council.

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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>Requests for stage 2 complaints received via email into the Complaints Team inbox receive an automated email acknowledgment. In addition to this, all stage 2 complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and this communication includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the points of concern that the council consider are in scope of the complaint – and residents are given the opportunity to change this • a request to the resident, to confirm the outcome they are seeking, if this isn't already clear
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		On receipt of the escalation request, the council will set out its understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident will be asked for clarification.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/general-complaints	Stage 2 complaints are considered independently by the Complaints Team.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes		The council always aim to respond within 20 working days as a maximum. If the 20-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints

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				Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
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		For stage 2 complaints, the council always aim to respond within 20 working days as a maximum. We do not extend timeframes. If the 20-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.
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>The council do not extend timeframes. If the 20-working day timeframe is not met and the complaint is overdue, the Complaints Team will continue to keep the resident informed of progress.</p> <p>Residents are informed at complaint acknowledgment stage that they have a right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point when they have exhausted the council's complaints process – this is on the basis that the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint, and affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.</p>

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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		This is standard practice and any outstanding actions and/or follow up work are logged and tracked by the Complaints Team, with updates provided to residents.
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		This is standard practice within the council.
6.19	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:</p> <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 the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied. 	Yes		This is standard practice within the council.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes		The Complaints Team investigate stage 2 complaints and this Team will involve all suitable staff (as appropriate) within the relevant service area.

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and 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	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/resolving-complaints	<p>The council's process for dealing with complaints is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledge where things have gone wrong and apologise in these instances • make it clear what action will be taken when complaints are upheld • offering financial remedies, if relevant

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/resolving-complaints	The council's complaints procedure sets out a range of remedies that are considered when resolving complaints.
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		Remedies offered will be clear and are tracked by the Complaints Team, to ensure they are actioned by individual service areas.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		Ombudsman Guidance is considered when making any decisions regarding remedies.

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: <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 	Yes		This level of detail will be included within the annual complaints report.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	<p>performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;</p> <p>c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</p> <p>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</p> <p>e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</p> <p>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</p>			
8.2	<p>The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.</p>	Yes	www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-to-complain/complaints-performance-and-service-improvement-report	<p>The annual complaints report is taken to Standards and Audit Committee and this report is published within the complaints section of the website (along with the outcome of the committee meeting).</p>
8.3	<p>Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.</p>	Yes		<p>This will be undertaken as and when required.</p>

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		The council will review and update its self-assessment if requested 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		The council will comply with this requirement if for any reason its unable to comply with the code.

Section 9: Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes		This is standard practice. For example, any changes to process/procedures or reminders for staff (as forms of learning actions), will benefit more than just the complainant, as the learning action should avoid a repeat occurrence.
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	Yes		Complaint themes and trends are analysed and reported to service areas, in order for service areas to identify positive changes in service delivery.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	introduce positive changes in service delivery.			
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>The council report back on learning and improvement from complaints via its complaints reporting cycle (mid-year and annual reporting). These reports go to Senior Management and then onto Standards and Audit Committee.</p> <p>Learning from complaints is shared with our Tenants Excellence Panel and is also a key part of our communications schedule.</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		The council has a Complaint Manager in post and this role reports into a Head of Service who has responsibility for complaints
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes		The council has a lead Member with responsibility for complaints. Complaints reports go via the lead Member prior to going onto Standards and Audit Committee.
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular	Yes		The Member with responsibility for complaints. receives information via

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	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.			complaints reports prior to any reports going onto Standards and Audit Committee. Access to information and/or staff forms part of the lead portfolio role that the Member has.
9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <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		This information is included within our mid-year and annual complaints reports which go via the lead Member for complaints and then onto Standards and Audit Committee.
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		This standard objective is in place for all staff who work within the Complaints team.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary and explanation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co- operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. 			