

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 complaint's performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

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

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

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code Provision	Code Requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / Explanation
1.2	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><i>'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i></p>	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy defines what the Councils consider to be a complaint.</p> <p>The Councils use the same definition for a complaint as the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which is <i>"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents. "</i></p>
1.3	<p>A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.</p>	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils will accept complaints if they do not contain the word complaint. The Councils will contact the complainant to understand their concerns raised and a complaint would be logged based on the discussions with the complainant.</p>
1.4	<p>Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.</p>	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils recognise the difference between a service request and complaint.</p> <p>A service request is a request from an individual to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils requiring action to be taken to put something right.</p> <p>Service requests are not complaints, but we will record and monitor those requests.</p>

				Over 2024/25 we will be adopting the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) definition of a service request.
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>When the customer raises dissatisfaction to their service request, this will then follow our internal processes to make sure that the complaint is logged on our complaints system.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the customer to make sure that any outstanding actions from their service request are completed whilst the customer goes through our complaints process.</p>
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>Acuity our tenant satisfaction survey provider, have the following wording on surveys to support tenants to make a complaint:</p> <p>"If you are dissatisfied with the service provided by Babergh and Mid Suffolk, they do have complaints process you can access by calling 0300 123 4000 and selecting option 7, emailing feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk or by completing a form on their website where you will find out more information."</p>	<p>The Councils ensure that through our tenant satisfaction surveys there is clear information on how to raise a complaint if needed.</p> <p>The Councils also carry out monthly transactional surveys on new lettings, Closed ASB cases and completed repairs. Dissatisfied customers requesting follow up are contacted back.</p> <p>The guidance will be widened out over this year to include our resident survey also.</p>

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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	When someone lets us know that they are unhappy with a service, we will accept it as a complaint unless it does not meet our definition of a complaint, although each complaint is considered on its own merits.
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints policy sets out the circumstances of which a matter will not be considered a complaint.</p> <p>Although this list is not meant to be exhaustive, our policy states that the following will not be considered. Although each complaint is reviewed on a case-by-case basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cases where right of appeal exists - Routine requests for services - Allegations of fraud - Services we do not deliver - Complaints about councillors as this is a code of conduct complaint and would be addressed under the code of conduct policy. - Complaints over a year old - Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy - Anonymous complaints - Where the matter raised is subject to formal court proceedings. <p>Unless there is evidence of a stamped letter of claim or particulars, the landlord can use the complaints process alongside the pre-action protocol stage. Please refer to the following for further guidance: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/guidance-notes/guidance-on-pre-action-protocol-for-housing-conditions-claims-and-service-complaints/</p>
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District	We will review complaints that are over a year old on a case-by-case basis however, the Councils may request a

	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.		Councils Complaints Policy	statement as to why the complaint could not be raised sooner.
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	Please refer to the Councils' complaints policy. If the Councils do not accept your complaint, you will be provided with the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A closure letter/e-mail detailing the reasons as to why the Councils' have not accepted your complaint. - The contact details for the relevant ombudsman, which we will refer you to.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints and we will not unreasonably refuse to escalate your complaint through our complaint's procedure however, there are some instances outlined above in which we may not be able to investigate your complaint. The Councils' will demonstrate our reasonings for not escalating your complaint and the reasons for not accepting a complaint We will make all considerations in line with our complaints policy that states we will consider all complaints on a case-by-case basis.

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	Yes	Please see next column	We accept complaints via the following channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Via our website (https://www.babergh.gov.uk/thecouncil/complimentscomments-andcomplaints/) or (https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/thecouncil/complimentscomments-andcomplaints/) - Via email to feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk. If a complaint is emailed to an officer, they will forward this to our

	residents who may need to access the complaints process.			<p>feedback inbox on the customers behalf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Via telephone (0300 1234000) - Via our social media feeds - In writing - Face to face
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>Complaints can be raised with any member of staff or contractor acting on the Councils behalf.</p> <p>Complaints raised with an individual member of staff will be emailed to feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk so the complaint can formally be logged on our system before following our usual complaints procedure.</p> <p>During 2024/25 the Councils will be undertaking further work to improve this area. Firstly, we will be undertaking a review of our complaints process to understand if there are gaps in the process, so we understand areas of improvement, and this will be shared as part of our 25/26 self assessment.</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		<p>We do not see high volumes of complaints as a negative and we will continue to use our feedback gathered from complaints to improve our services.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor our complaint levels to ensure that complaints are being logged regarding our services. We will also ensure that services with low levels of complaints are monitored to ensure that residents understand how to make a complaint.</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaints policy is currently written in a black ink on white backed paper on our website. The Councils will also make suitable arrangements to make sure that any customer who requires the policy in an accessible format will be considered.</p> <p>Our complaints policy details the two-stage process and what will happen at each stage with the timescales for responding.</p> <p>The policy can be found on our website and links to this are throughout this self-assessment.</p> <p>During the course of 2024/25 the Councils will be working towards making some of our published documentation easier to read and more accessible for all. We will be considering an easy-to-read</p>

				<p>complaints policy to ensure that everyone understands the policy and its purpose.</p> <p>Our tenancy engagement team will be working towards creating a new tenants handbook for all our tenants as well as an easy read tenancy agreement, which will include information about our complaints process.</p>
3.5	<p>The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.</p>	Yes	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy</p>	<p>This Compliments, Comments, and Complaints Policy is published on our websites and can be found in the following locations on our websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Babergh Website - Complaints Policy - Mid Suffolk Website - Complaints Policy <p>You may request a copy of our policy by emailing feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk and we will consider any reasonable adjustments requested to ensure you are able to read the policy.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman investigate complaints and resolve disputes involving tenants and leaseholders of social landlords as well as for their voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents).</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman is a free, independent, and impartial service and this work is funded by annual landlord subscription fees.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman work with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, the New Homes Ombudsman, and the Regulator of Social Housing, under a memorandum of understanding, to agree a common approach to collaborative working.</p> <p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are required to follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which became statutory on the 1st of April 2024. You may find more information regarding the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code here: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/complaint-handling-code-2024/</p>
3.6	<p>Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be</p>	Yes	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy</p>	<p>The Councils will always allow a representative act on their behalf, and they will be granted to represent the complainant.</p> <p>We may request written authorisation from the person who is being</p>

	represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.			<p>acted on behalf of to ensure that our complaints process is duly followed.</p> <p>During 2024/25 the Councils will be amending our complaints policy to ensure that this information is clearly detailed.</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.	No	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk - How We Deal with Complaints</p> <p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy</p>	<p>The Councils provide information on how to contact the Ombudsman and their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On our website - In our complaints policy - Throughout our complaints process (acknowledgements and responses at stage one and stage two) <p>Over 2024/25 the Councils will ensure this information is in our tenant's handbook, alongside the other rights we are required to make tenants aware of as part of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability consumer standard. Other rights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decent Homes - HHSRS legislation

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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils' have a designated role titled 'Customer Liaison Officer' for the oversight and responsibility of complaint handling.</p> <p>Stage One complaints are responded to by a manager of the service area that the complaint relates to and reviewed by the Customer Liaison Officer.</p> <p>Stage Two complaints are responded to by the Customer Liaison Officer and reviewed by both the Assistant Manager for Customer Services and Head of Customer Experience.</p> <p>The Councils' Customer Liaison Officer works independently from the other teams in the Councils and the involvement at stage one is to review for spelling, compliance with policies and to check the response is adequate. The Customer Liaison Officer is not involved with the investigations at stage one.</p>
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		<p>The Customer Liaison Officer has access to staff at all levels, including senior management to facilitate the quick resolution of complaints and report on performance.</p> <p>The Customer Liaison Officer has the authority to act and resolve disputes quickly and fairly.</p>
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>https://www.babergh.gov.uk/our-complaint-task-force</p> <p>https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/our-complaint-task-force</p>	<p>The Councils prioritise complaint handling and we look to learn from our lessons learned to improve our service.</p> <p>The Housing Team have a dedicated complaints handling role to help coordinate stage one complaint responses</p> <p>The Councils run a quarterly 'Housing Complaints</p>

				<p>Taskforce' to share complaint figures, themes, trends and lessons learned. In 2024/24 the Councils will be reviewing the task force to ensure we are continually improving the session and ensure we can demonstrate tangible improvements from our complaint lessons learnt</p> <p>The Complaints Handling Taskforce is attended by the two portfolio holders for housing, a tenant who is a member of the Councils' tenant board, the Customer Liaison Officer, the Resolutions Coordinator, members of the transformation team and other invited employees.</p> <p>Over 2024 we have completed training with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to ensure complaint handling staff are continuously developing their knowledge and skills regarding complaints handling.</p>
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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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils have one single policy for complaints called "Compliments, Comments, and Complaints"</p> <p>The Councils do not treat any customers or tenants any differently if they make a complaint.</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	The Councils do not have any additional stages to the complaints process. We abide by the Housing Ombudsman guidance of having a two-stage complaint process.
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	Please see 5.2.

	and delay access to the Ombudsman.			
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will undertake a review of the complaint internally if the complaint is regarding a contractor.</p> <p>This will continue to make up part of our two-stage process.</p>
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Complaints & Compliments Policy and Procedure Orwell Housing (orwell-housing.co.uk)	<p>Orwell Housing do handle complaints regarding some sheltered housing provision, and they do comply with the complaints handling code</p> <p>Complaints & Compliments Policy and Procedure Orwell Housing (orwell-housing.co.uk)</p> <p>During 2024/25 the Councils will be working with managers to ensure that complaints performance is reviewed during contract reviews and any contractors feel confident with our complaints process</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>On submission of a complaint the Councils' complaints system sends an automatic acknowledgment to the complainant.</p> <p>The complaint investigator will contact the complainant within 5 working days to set out their understanding of their complaint.</p> <p>Our customer satisfaction surveys have demonstrated that our tenants and customers have improved satisfaction when they receive a phone call from us regarding their complaint. Alongside the acknowledgement that is sent out, the Councils are also committed to holding a verbal conversation, where this is practicable.</p>
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk	Please see 5.6.

	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.		District Councils Complaints Policy	During the acknowledgement stage the Councils will highlight what areas we are not responsible for. We will also highlight the correct organisation that the customer should contact.
5.8	<p>At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind. - give the resident a fair chance to set out their position. - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and - consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>In February and March 2024, the Councils worked with the Local Government Ombudsman to provide complaint handling training. Over 70 employees took part in these series of training sessions to improve the quality of our complaint investigations and reviews.</p> <p>We continue to work across all services to ensure these principles are embedded and remind services of this at the quarterly taskforce meetings.</p> <p>From 2024/25, we will be completing sample audits to review our compliance against these areas.</p> <p>The Councils will also continue to review what complaint handling training is provided to our staff on a regular basis and explore the options available to us through the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Local Government Ombudsman.</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.	No	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>When the Councils are liaising with the customer regarding an extension to their complaint, the Councils will confirm this in advance of the deadline, we will ensure this becomes our standard practice over 2024/25.</p> <p>During this correspondence we will also let the customer know how often this will be done. This timeframe will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</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.	No	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	We commit to giving everyone equal access to the rights contained in the Human Rights Act, under article 14 (Prohibition of Discrimination). This is regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, political views or any other personal

	Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.			<p>characteristics. We will treat all of our customers fairly and reasonably when a complaint is made against us, we will consider any adjustments that need to be made so no one is disadvantaged during our complaints process.</p> <p>We have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure we make reasonable adjustments to support residents to access services and support. The Councils' Customer Liaison Officer will keep a record of the reasonable adjustments requested and review these as they occur.</p> <p>Over 2024/25 we will create a reasonable adjustment policy to ensure customers are clear on the responsibilities we have under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure we record all instances of reasonable adjustments made, as this tends to be informally recorded at present</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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils will not refuse to escalate a complaint through our complaint's procedure unless we have valid reasons to do so.</p> <p>Once a request for escalation is received, the Councils' Customer Liaison Officer will decide on the best course of action. If escalation is refused, this will be provided in writing to the customer.</p>
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.	No		<p>The Councils keep a full record of the complaint, outcomes at each stage and notes/evidence surrounding the review of the complaint on our complaints system.</p> <p>In early 2024, we will be launching a new complaints system Our complaints system will store the relevant dates relating to the complaint and has the ability to store relevant documentation.</p> <p>Once our new complaints system has launched, we will co</p>

5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes		<p>The Councils have a “Housing Compensation Policy” which is used to remedy complaints at stage one and stage two, and we encourage the use of this policy to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage.</p> <p>The officer assigned to investigate a stage one complaint will also have the delegation to resolve the complaint at that stage.</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	Babergh & Mid Suffolk Unreasonable and Persistent Policy	<p>The Councils have an “Unreasonable and Persistent Policy” and this policy details the procedures in place regarding unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>The Councils also have a process to collate and log the relevant information regarding a designation and these are saved and kept on record.</p> <p>The Councils also have a Customer Alert List. This list is reviewed regularly to ensure that we put proportionate measures in place to protect employees against potentially violent customers.</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.	No	Babergh & Mid Suffolk Unreasonable and Persistent Policy	We have a separate policy for unreasonable and persistent contact, and we will ensure that when making any cases to a director, we consider the Equality Act, this will be reflected in our policy from Q1 2024.

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	No		We will work with complaint handling colleagues to agree a process and look to implement this over 2024/25.

	provided to the resident.			
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>As part of our complaint's procedure, all complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days.</p> <p>As part of this acknowledgement email or written communication, the officer tasked with reviewing the complaint will also set out their understanding of the complaint.</p> <p>At present the Councils complaints system is set up with a ten-working day timer from when the complaint is submitted or uploaded to our complaints system. We will need to explore the options available to us so we can be assured that we can change our process or amend our system. This also affects 6.3 below.</p>
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils will respond to a complaint within 10 working days of a complaint being acknowledged.</p> <p>The complaint response will be sent via our complaints system, including postal responses, and our complaints system monitors the time left on the complaint.</p>
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>We will ensure that any extension to the complaint deadline is shared with the resident in writing and it will not be more than 10 working days.</p> <p>The written correspondence will include why we have extended the complaint and the contact information for the Housing Ombudsman.</p>
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		Please see 6.4
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	The Councils will respond to a complaint when the answer to the complaint is known.

	outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.			<p>For example, we may include information regarding scheduled visits from contractors are going to take place and not when the outcome of this visit is known.</p> <p>Any outcome to any visit, will then be included in a suitable works plan moving forward.</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils response templates have been agreed with the Housing Ombudsman and this encourages our responders to detail and address all points raised whilst a complaint response is being written.</p> <p>Where we know or are aware of relevant best practice, law or policy, this will be included in the complaint response to the customer.</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>During conversations with the customer or when new information came to light, the Councils will consider the information brought forward.</p> <p>If the information pertains to the stage one complaint, this will be added as long as it does not delay the response.</p> <p>Any new information will be logged as a new complaint.</p>
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage. b. the complaint definition. c. the decision on the complaint. d. the reasons for any decisions made. e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right. f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied 	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>Our complaint response template has been agreed with the Housing Ombudsman Service and includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaint Stage - Complaint Definition - The Decision/Outcome - Reasonings - Remedies - Outstanding Actions - How to escalate the complaint

	with the response.			
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Stage 2

Code Provision	Code Requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / Explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils confirm that we would progress a stage one complaint to a stage two in the appropriate circumstances.</p> <p>The complainant may escalate their complaint to a stage two if all or part of their complaint is not resolved to their satisfaction at stage one.</p> <p>On receipt of the escalation request we will set out our understanding of the outstanding issues and the outcomes that they are seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we will ask them for clarification and a full definition of the complaint will be agreed between both parties.</p> <p>Once we have considered the complaint escalation request and if we decline to escalate the complaint, we will communicate this with you in line with the information above.</p>
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils acknowledge all stage two complaints within 5 working days in line with our Complaints Policy. All complaints will be confirmed in writing either via email or letter.</p> <p>We will also consider acknowledging verbally, if we are requested to do so as a reasonable adjustment.</p>
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils will review all stage two complaints received prior to investigation. We will ensure that all complaints are given fair consideration and if we are unsure about any elements of the stage two complaint raised, we will contact the customer to ensure we fully understand their complaint.</p>
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils' have a specific role for the investigation of stage two complaints, which is the</p>

	considered the complaint at stage 1.		Policy	Customer Liaison Officer.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	The Councils respond to stage two complaints within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged, this is in line with Ombudsman guidance and our own complaints policy.
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	We will ensure that any extension to the complaint deadline is shared with the resident in writing and it will not be more than 20 working days. The written correspondence will include why we have extended the complaint and the contact information for the Housing Ombudsman.
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	See 6.15
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	The Councils will respond to a complaint when the answer to the complaint is known. For example, we may include information regarding scheduled visits from contractors are going to take place and not when the outcome of this visit is known. Any outcome to any visit, will then be included in a suitable works plan moving forward.
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	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	The Councils response templates have been agreed with the Housing Ombudsman and this encourages our responders to detail and address all points raised whilst a complaint response is being written. Where we know or are aware of relevant best practice, law, or policy, this will be included in the complaint response to the customer.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage. b. the complaint definition. c. the decision on the complaint.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	Our complaint response template has been agreed with the Housing Ombudsman Service and includes the following: - Complaint Stage - Complaint Definition - The Decision/Outcome

	<p>d. the reasons for any decisions made.</p> <p>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right.</p> <p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasonings - Remedies - Outstanding Actions <p>How to escalate the complaint</p>
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Complaints Policy	<p>The Councils enforce a two stage complaints process, which is defined within our policy and stage two of the complaint is the final response.</p> <p>Our stage two complaint responses will involve the relevant members of staff to ensure that all information is collated, and an adequate response is provided to the customer.</p>

Section 7: Putting things right

Code Provision	Code Requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / Explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising. • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong. • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons. • Taking action if there has been delay. • Reconsidering or changing a decision. • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum. • Providing a financial remedy. 	Yes		<p>In our complaints responses and our correspondence with the customer, where something has gone wrong, the Councils will acknowledge this.</p> <p>We will apologise for the mistakes made in writing and acknowledge what went wrong.</p> <p>We will provide an explanation as to what went wrong and why it may have gone wrong.</p> <p>We will consider the impact in relation to any delays that may have been incurred by the customer.</p> <p>If new information comes to light or we accept that a decision was wrong, we will acknowledge that the decision was incorrect.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			<p>If new information comes to light during a complaint, the Councils will amend the relevant record that this relates to. For example, this could be for information relating to the property or personal information.</p> <p>Regarding financial remedies, please see 7.2.</p> <p>Over 2024/25 the Councils will be looking to provide more formal guidance to complaint handling officers to ensure they feel confident with the wide range of remedies that could be offered to put things right.</p>
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk Housing Compensation Policy	<p>Our Compensation Policy has discretionary impact payments, and we will consider the impact on the customer when considering their complaint.</p> <p>The Councils will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandatory Payments - Quantifiable Loss Payments - Discretionary Payments or - Gestures of Goodwill <p>As above we will be reviewing the guidance provided to officers to ensure the wide range of remedies is understood.</p>
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 will detail any remedies in a complaint response.</p> <p>If we are not able to share the remedy outcome within the next 10 or 20 working days depending on the complaint stage, we will detail what our current position is and the next steps that we will be taking.</p> <p>Any offers of remedy will be in writing.</p>
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		<p>During complaint investigations our staff at both stage one and stage two are encouraged to review the Housing Ombudsman and Local</p>

				Government Ombudsman's advice, guidance, and best practice available on their website for both the investigation and deciding upon any remedies.
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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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept. c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman. d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints. e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	No		By the end of 2024/25 we will ensure that our annual report is scrutinised not only by our Senior Leadership colleagues but through our tenant engagement panel and explore opportunities to provide an annual report to Overview and Scrutiny.
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	No		We currently report complaints data on a quarterly basis to cabinet and from 2024 we will be reviewing our reporting and scrutiny methods to ensure we comply with the code. The complaints handling code is always published on the Councils websites annually.

8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes		We will comply with this following any restructures/merger.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		If the Housing Ombudsman recommended any updates to the self-assessment following an investigation, the Councils will comply with this.
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 will ensure we inform the Ombudsman if a major incident occurs.

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>The Councils host a quarterly complaints taskforce, which is attended by our portfolio holders for housing, a member of our tenant board, and several internal team leaders from our teams across housing.</p> <p>As part of these quarterly taskforce's complaints data is shared between the teams including the lessons learnt from complaints received. Feedback is provided and best practice is shared, and we also review other information provided by the housing ombudsman.</p> <p>Our complaints taskforce is presently undergoing a transformation to make these sessions even more valuable to ensure lessons learnt are identified for service improvement.</p> <p>Further to this, as mentioned under 7.1 over 2024/25 the Councils will be looking at improving our investigations and outcomes at stage one, so our complaint outcomes not only consider the personal impact/remedy but also consider the wider picture such as recommendations to amend policies or procedures to ensure that we are continuously learning.</p>
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>The Councils believe that a positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness that a dispute or complaint is handled.</p> <p>We continue to embed a policy of positive complaint handling and see this as a key aspect of the work we collectively undertake.</p>
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on	Yes		Please see 9.1 tenants and Councillors attend these panels.

	wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.			
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes		<p>The Head of Customer Experience is the lead accountable officer for complaints handling. The Head of Customer experience has access to the themes and trends arising from complaints.</p> <p>The Head of Customer Experience is also the policy holder for our Compliments, Comments, and Complaints Policy as well as our Unreasonable and Persistent Policy.</p>
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>As Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are two sovereign Councils (Babergh District and Mid Suffolk District) we have two portfolio holders for our housing department, and as such we have two Members Responsible for Complaints (MRC).</p> <p>Councillor Jessie Carter is the Babergh Cabinet Member responsible for Housing whilst Councillor Richard Winch is the Mid Suffolk Cabinet Member for Housing.</p>
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.	No		<p>Whilst the MRC's receive regular reporting and are invited to the quarterly housing complaints taskforce, we have not formally introduced this role and will work with portfolio holders to more formally introduce this role.</p>
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance. b. regular reviews of issues and trends 	No		<p>We will ensure that our cabinet members receive monthly briefings, and this information is also shared as part of our quarterly performance reporting.</p>

	<p>arising from complaint handling.</p> <p>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman’s investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</p> <p>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</p>			
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</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>	Yes		<p>Housing roles do have a standard objective which is included in any job description for a role that involves complaint handling; however, we will explore how we can widen this out across other services across 2024/25.</p>