

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

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Content

1.0 Purpose	2
2.0 Our Approach to Complaints	2
3.0 What is a Complaint?	2
4.0 What is Not a Complaint?	3
5.0 Types of Complaint	4
6.0 Making a Complaint	4
7.0 Who Can Make a Complaint?.....	5
8.0 Process of Making a Complaint.....	6
9.0 Timescales	7
10.0 Monitoring and Reporting	8
11.0 Process of Handling Complaints.....	9
12.0 Dealing with Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints	10
13.0 Compliments and Comments.....	10
14.0 Relevant Legislation	11
15.0 Housing Complaints Handling and Management Chapter	11

1.0 Purpose

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council is committed to providing the best possible service to our customers and this is at the heart of everything we do.

The Council is a large and complex organisation and provides a wide range of services to many people. Sometimes we will get things wrong. We encourage feedback so we can learn and make improvements.

We ensure our staff are fully trained on complaints handling and can deal effectively with customer feedback.

This policy ensures that there is a clear process for our customers to follow when making a complaint. It also helps us to put things right when they go wrong and most importantly ensures we learn from our mistakes.

All feedback is important so this policy also covers how we handle compliments and comments from our customers.

2.0 Our Approach to Complaints

Our aim is to ensure that complaints are handled in a consistent, fair and appropriate manner. When dealing with complaints we use the following principles:

- It should be easy for customers to make a complaint.
- When a complaint is made, where possible, we will focus on early resolution and try to solve the issue for the customer.
- When a full investigation is needed, we will consider all aspects and contact the complainant for more information when we need to.
- We will deal with complaints in an open-minded and impartial way. The complainant, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, will be given a fair chance to set out their position and comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
- Customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly, and will not be disadvantaged in any way for raising their issue.
- When responding to a complaint, we will explain what happened, admit when things go wrong and do our best to put them right. If a complaint is unjustified we will explain why we believe this to be the case.
- We will regularly monitor all complaints to ensure timescales and satisfaction levels are met.
- We will learn from complaints so that we can improve our services.

3.0 What is a Complaint?

A complaint to us is an *“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals”*

This could, but not exclusively fall into the following categories:

- A complaint about a service.
- A complaint about a member of staff.
- A complaint about a policy.

4.0 What is Not a Complaint?

There are other subjects which we recognise that customers may feel the need to complain about but do not fit into the definition of a complaint under this policy.

Appealing service outcomes/decisions

Where a customer has a statutory right of appeal against a decision this will not be treated as a complaint. For example, where planning permission has been refused, where you do not agree with the outcome of a Benefit application, or housing application, or when you do not agree with the banding of your property for Council Tax.

Insurance claims

If the person contacting the Council wishes to make an insurance claim for the loss they have incurred, they should be advised to put the full details in writing to our Finance team:

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, FAO Finance Team, Brocks Hill Council Offices, Washbrook Lane
Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5JJ

Tel: 0116 288 8961

Email: insurance@oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Complaint forms should not be used for insurance claims, as this can slow down the process.

Complaining about a Councillor

If a customer feels it necessary to complain about the conduct of a Councillor there is a separate process for this type of complaint which can be found on our website.

In these circumstances, if you are not sure how to proceed please contact our Customer Service Team on 0116 288 8961 who will be able to advise you of the correct process to follow.

Members Enquiries

General enquiries from Members will not be treated as complaints. There is a separate process for these.

Complaint about a service area outside our responsibility

The customer should be referred on to the appropriate authority.

Complaints about information requested under the Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection Act

The customer should contact the Information Commissioner at www.ico.org.uk or call 0303 1231113.

Neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour

Should be reported to the housing team, the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer or the Police where appropriate. We would only investigate a complaint that refers to our failure to deal with the disagreement appropriately

Issues regarding hate crime or domestic violence

These should be reported to the Police.

5.0 Types of Complaint

Multi areas of complaints

Customers sometimes make complaints about more than one section/department, how we handle these will depend on if they are unrelated or linked.

Unrelated Complaints

Complaints that do not appear to be linked in any way e.g. an issue with a park and a housing repair, will be separated by the complaint administrator and sent to the departments concerned, and separate responses will be sent on each part of the complaint.

Linked complaints

With complaints that are linked and involve more than one section or department, the complaint administrator will establish what issue is the main part of the complaint and that section/department will lead on the complaint.

Only one response letter will be sent. The lead manager will liaise with the other section/department to coordinate the response.

Complaints about our partners

Any complaint or issue relating to dissatisfaction with services provided on behalf of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should be directed to the organisation delivering the service in the first instance.

If the organisation delivering the service does not resolve the issue, the customer can bring the matter to the Council's attention and it can be considered as a complaint.

Complaints about our contractors

The Council use private contractors for some repairs in Council-owned homes and from time to time a tenant or leaseholder may remain dissatisfied with the way a contractor has dealt with their issue. In this situation if you contact the Council we will manage the complaint and ensure that a contractor responds in line with the Council's complaint policy

Anonymous complaints

We will accept and act on anonymous complaints even though it will not be possible for the complaint to be acknowledged or responded to in this circumstance. Anonymous complaints will be investigated and used to monitor and develop our services.

6.0 Making a Complaint

Customers can make a complaint by any of the following methods:

- **Online** – by completing our online form at

https://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/compliments_comments_and_complaints

- **Email** – by emailing our Customer Service Team at: CSC@oadby-wigston.gov.uk
- **In writing** – by writing to our Customer Service Team at: Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Brocks Hill Council Offices, Washbrook Lane Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5JJ
- **Phone** – by calling our Customer Service Team at: 0116 288 8961
- **In Person** – at our reception point at Brocks Hill Council Offices, Washbrook Lane Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5JJ
- **Social Media** – by posting a message on any of our social media accounts. Please note - If a complaint is received via social media the complainant will be sign posted to contact the Customer Service Team to provide more information.
- **Via a third party (with permission)** – this includes advocates, MP's and Councillors. We will support customers who require assistance to make a complaint and will make reasonable adjustments where practicable.

If a customer makes a complaint they:

- will not suffer any penalty or discrimination as a result
- will have their complaint acknowledged, taken seriously and investigated
- will receive a reasoned and honest response

7.0 Who Can Make a Complaint?

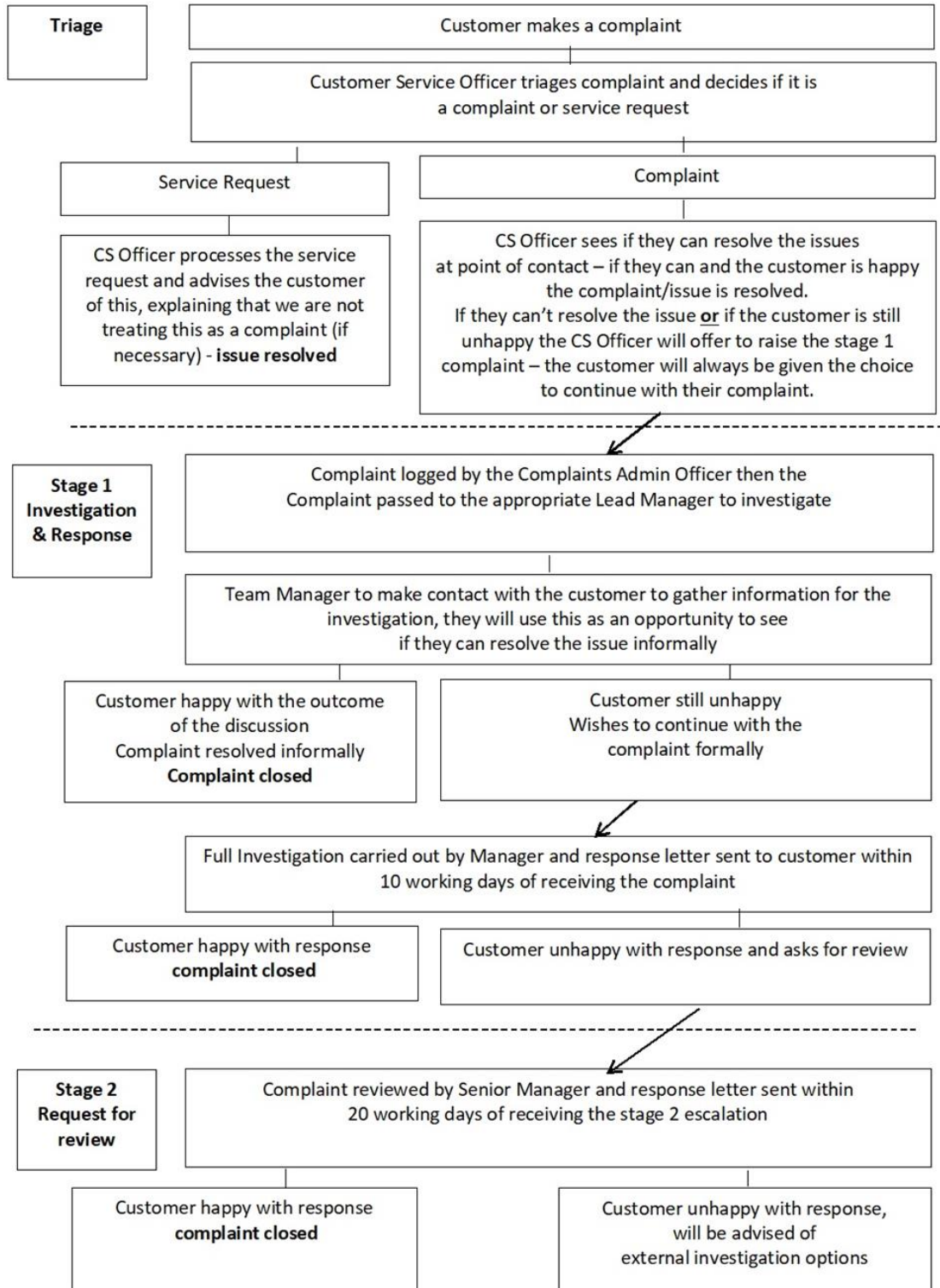
We accept complaints from residents, local businesses, visitors, suppliers of services, community groups and other groups or individuals that use or are affected by our services.

We also accept complaints from people acting on behalf of someone else such as Councillors, Members of Parliament, advocates and support agencies.

Where a complaint is made on behalf of a customer, we will require confirmation that the representative has permission to act on their behalf and information can be shared.

8.0 Process of Making a Complaint

This flowchart shows the process for making a complaint and relates to both Housing Complaints and all other general complaints.



External Investigation – General Complaints

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman considers general complaints about local authorities. They investigate complaints about poor service, failure to provide a service and administrative failure.

If after going through both formal stages of the Council's complaint procedure, the complainant remains unhappy with the way their complaint has been handled, they have the right to complain to the Ombudsman:

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

www.lgo.org.uk

External Investigation – Housing Complaints

The Housing Ombudsman considers housing related complaints. Before contacting the Housing Ombudsman, the tenant has the option to contact a designated person first to help find a solution.

A designated person can be either a local Councillor or an MP. Their role is to help resolve disputes between tenants and their landlords which they can do in whatever way they think is most likely to work. If the designated person cannot help they can refer a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Tenants can also choose to go directly to the Housing Ombudsman and bypass the designated person, but they have to wait for eight weeks from the response to their stage two complaint before they do so:

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The point of contact for the Housing Ombudsman will be the Housing Services Manager.

Help and Advice from the Housing Ombudsman

Residents have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point they have exhausted the landlord's complaints process, but at any stage in the complaints process.

The Housing Ombudsman dispute support advisors can offer residents support and advice at any point during the complaint process.

9.0 Timescales

We will always try to resolve any issue that is raised with us early on. If we are unable to do this informally, customers can invoke the formal process. There are 2 stages to our formal complaints process.

Stage 1

The initial complaint - Response time for this complaint is 10 working days.

Stage 2

Complainant is unhappy with the response that they have received to their initial complaint so they are asking for their complaint to be reviewed. Response time for this complaint is 20 working days.

If it is not possible to resolve a complaint within the stated timescales, the customer will be kept up to date with the progress of the complaint and informed when they should expect a response.

All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint.

If the Complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2 they can take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman as outlined above.

Timescales in which to make a complaint

Normally, a complaint must be made within 12 months of the event you want to complain about, or finding out that you have a reason to complain. In certain circumstances, we may accept your complaint after the 12 month time limit.

10.0 Monitoring and Reporting

Complaints and service failures will be monitored, analysed and reported on by the Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager.

The Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager or the Chief Executive will chair complaints review meetings to ensure that we are effective at handling complaints and to highlight areas for improvement.

Reviewing complaints is invaluable in allowing teams to identify any specific strengths and weaknesses within their service area, measuring customer satisfaction with services and most importantly using feedback to improve customer focus and deliver better services.

Role of the Complaints Admin Officer

Our Complaints Admin has several roles to play within the complaints procedure:

- To record all complaints.
- To acknowledge all complaints.
- To ensure that complaints are administered in a timely manner.
- To ensure that information on complaints is recorded for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- To provide feedback to the Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager, Heads of Service and Team Managers on the processing of complaints handling within departments.
- To provide guidance and advice to those handling complaints.

Role of the investigating Manager

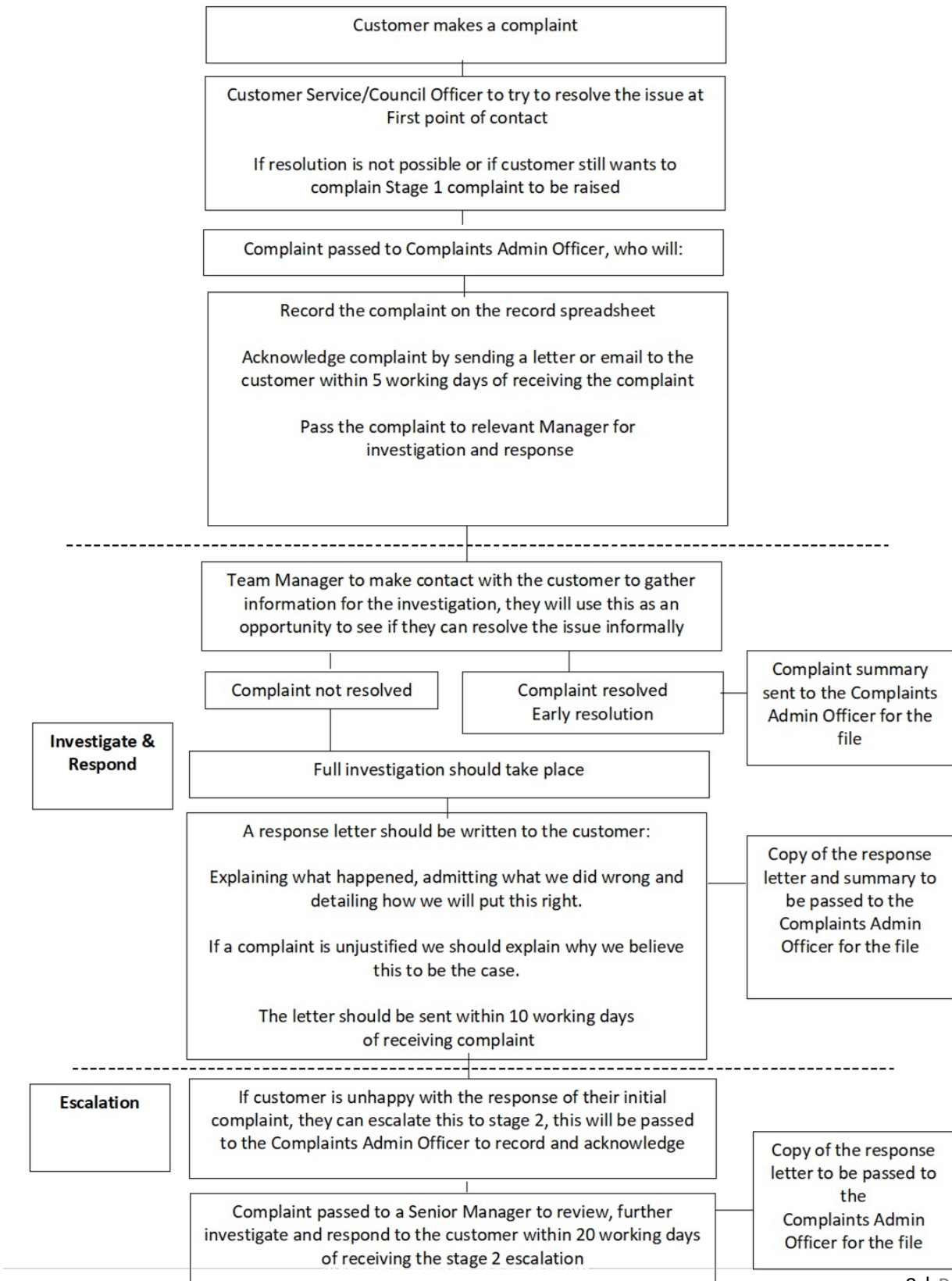
- To conduct a thorough investigation of any complaints received for their service area.
- To try and resolve issues as soon as possible.
- To respond to the customer within response timeframes.
- To provide a copy of the response letter and summary of the complaints investigation to the Compliance Officer.
- To implement any actions needed as a result of the complaint.

Role of the Senior Review Manager

- To review the initial complaint investigation.

- To review all the evidence and consider the complaint again.
- To respond to the customer with their findings.
- To ensure lessons are learned if appropriate.

11.0 Process of Handling Complaints



12.0 Dealing with Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

In a small number of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable, persistent or vexatious. In most instances when we consider someone's behaviour is unreasonable we will explain why and ask them to change it. If they continue to behave in an unreasonable, persistent or vexatious way, it may be necessary to restrict contact with the Council.

Please see our Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Complainants Policy for more information about how we handle these type of complaints.

13.0 Compliments and Comments

Compliments

Compliments help us understand what we are doing well and what our customers really value. It's good for our staff to know that people appreciate their work. It also enables us to identify areas of best practice and share them across the Council.

When we receive a compliment we will:

- Acknowledge the compliment where possible
- Pass details of the compliment and the comment on to the Complaints Admin so that this can be recorded for reporting purposes.
- Pass the compliment to the relevant service managers for their information and so they can share it with their team

Comments

A comment is a suggestion, idea or observation about an area of our service. Comments give us ideas about improving our services and providing value for money.

Some comments do not require a response, but all comments will be recorded and shared with the relevant service area for continuous improvement.

Customers can make a Compliment or Comment by any of the following methods:

- **Online** – by completing our online form at: https://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/compliments_comments_and_complaints
- **Email** – by emailing our Customer Service Team at: CSC@oadby-wigston.gov.uk
- **In writing** – by writing to our Customer Service Team at: Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, Council Offices, Station Road, Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 2DR
- **Phone** – by calling our Customer Service Team at: 0116 288 8961
- **In Person** – when meeting with a Council Officer, for example during a home visit from a Housing Officer.
- **Social Media** – by posting a message on any of our social media accounts. Please note - If a complaint is received via social media the complainant will be sign posted to contact the Customer Service Team to provide more information.

14.0 Relevant Legislation

All complaints will be handled in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The handling and storage of personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation at all times and in accordance with the Council's Privacy Policy.

All complaints received will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. We will, when necessary adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate any individual's needs such as providing documents in large print or Braille, arranging meetings in person or undertaking home visits where appropriate.

In implementing this Policy the Council will comply with the Regulator for Social Housing's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (July 2020).

15.0 Housing Complaints Handling and Management Chapter

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 has empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures social housing landlords should have in place for considering complaints. Please see our Housing Complaints - Handling and Management - Housing Chapter for more information about how we handle these type of complaints.