

20 June 2025

Housing
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SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY

James Biddlestone
Chief Executive Officer
Mansfield District Council
Civic Centre
Chesterfield Road South
Mansfield
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Dear James Biddlestone

Re: Findings from our review of the landlord's complaint policy

Thank you for providing the annual Complaint Handling Code compliance submission form on 28 June 2024, and the policy review email response on 30 May 2025.

We have now had the opportunity to review how the landlords complaint policy meets the applicable Code provisions that should be clearly set out in a landlords complaint policy. Therefore this review does not include all provisions of the Code as some relate to service provision and would be reviewed at a later date if the Ombudsman determined a policy in practice review was required.

By taking this approach, we aim to work with landlords to achieve consistency across the sector and ensure that residents receive a fair service, regardless of where they live and who provides housing services.

We would encourage the landlord to review our published guidance and tools available on our Centre for Learning. This includes key information about the Code and how it can be applied, and also how senior leaders (including the Member Responsible for Complaints) can use the self-assessment to scrutinise the service effectively.

Our review has identified 11 recommendations, as outlined in Appendix 1.

In terms of next steps, we encourage all landlords to carefully consider any recommended changes to policy and to take time to ensure that any changes are embedded across the organisation.

We will review the landlord's response to our recommendations through next year's annual submissions process. In the case of Mansfield District Council, we would expect the submission to be provided within 6 months of the financial year-end, and no later than 30 September 2025.

It is also important to highlight that although our review has focussed on the landlord's complaint handling policy, the wider provisions of the Code still apply. It is vital that the landlord does not lose focus on both handling complaints effectively in practice and using learning from these as a valuable tool to drive change and improvement, where needed.

In addition to complaint handling, we publish a range of reports to share insights from the complaints we investigate to help landlords drive change in their service provision. These include:

- our spotlight reports that focus on areas of landlord service provision where we see reoccurring failure through our casework,
- severe maladministration and insight reports that focus on case studies and key learning points
- special investigation and wider order reports which share learning from investigations relating to specific landlords or complaints.

I hope that you find this review helpful and that our comments support the landlord to make positive changes to its complaint handling service. We are committed to using our monitoring activities to provide support where needed, whilst still holding landlords accountable.

Yours sincerely

S.Bartlett

Stacey Bartlett

Duty to Monitor Officer

Duty to Monitor Team

Appendix 1

Commentary / Observations	Recommendation
<p>Code Provision 1.2</p> <p>Paragraph 2.2 of the complaint policy has the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint. However, this states it is 'acknowledged' rather than used and it is not clear if the definition in 2.1 is applied for housing complaints.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy and make it clear that housing complaints use the Housing Ombudsman definition.</p>
<p>Code Provision 1.3</p> <p>Paragraph 2.1 of the complaint policy references that a complaint can be considered a dissatisfaction. However, it is unclear that this definition is used for a housing complaint and is not explicit regarding that a resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.</p> <p>There is no reference in the policy to residents being given the choice to make a complaint (although reference to choice is stated when a resident expresses dissatisfaction within a survey response).</p> <p>Paragraph 8.18 of the complaint policy gives information about third party complaints and that they are answered in accordance with the landlord's policy.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy and include that a resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.</p> <p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its policy to make it clear that when a resident expresses dissatisfaction, landlords must give them the choice to make a complaint.</p>
<p>Code Provisions 5.2 and 5.3</p> <p>The complaints policy only makes reference to a Stage 1 and Stage 2 process. Paragraph 8.1 states this is a two stage process.</p> <p>However, section 8 also states the following prior to Stage 1 -</p> <p>'MDC aims to quickly resolve straight -forward complaints that require little or no investigation or where the tenant is vulnerable or at risk. If the issue cannot be resolved, there are two stages'.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy to ensure it is clear there are only two stages to the complaint process without resolving the complaint outside of the complaint process (Stage '0').</p>

<p>Code Provisions 5.6 and 5.7</p> <p>For Stage 1, paragraphs 8.3 - 8.4 demonstrate what the landlord will seek to establish with the complainant and ask for further information if anything within the complaint is unclear. There is not a reference at Stage 1 that includes which aspects of the complaint they are and are not responsible for.</p> <p>There is less detail regarding the process for Stage 2 complaints and what will be included in the acknowledgement of the Stage 2 complaint.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy to ensure it is clear that the landlord will set out their understanding of the complaint, the outcomes the resident is seeking, what aspects they are and are not responsible for, and that the landlord will ask the resident for clarification if any aspect of the complaint is unclear, at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.</p>
<p>Code Provision 5.9</p> <p>There is no reference in the policy to Mansfield Council agreeing with the resident suitable intervals for the resident being updated on the complaint, when the response falls outside of the extended timescales set out in the Code.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy so it makes clear that where responses (to both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints) fall outside the Code's extended timescales, the landlord will agree with the resident suitable intervals for being updated on the complaint.</p>
<p>Code Provision 6.5</p> <p>Paragraph 8.6 of the complaint policy confirm the timescale and that if the complaint is complex, a further 10 working days may be requested. The policy states this is clearly explained to the complainant and details of the relevant Ombudsman.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman details are in Section 9 of the complaint policy, although the Housing Ombudsman address needs to be updated.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its policy and update the postal address of the Housing Ombudsman.</p>
<p>Code Provision 6.6</p> <p>Paragraph 8.8 of the complaint policy confirms the response is provided to the resident when the answer is known, not when the outstanding actions are completed. The policy references providing the customer with an update.</p> <p>Paragraph 8.8 is situated within Stage 1 and therefore there is no reference within the Stage 2 section.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy and ensure it is clear this paragraph applies to both Stage 1 and Stage 2 responses.</p>

<p>Code Provision 6.11</p> <p>Within paragraph 8.2 of the complaint policy, Stage 1 complaints are logged within 5 days. There is not an equivalent timescale for Stage 2 complaints.</p> <p>The self-assessment provides details of an automated service to acknowledge Stage 2 complaints.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy and include the acknowledgement timescale for Stage 2 complaints.</p>
<p>Code Provision 6.12</p> <p>Paragraph 8.12 of the complaint policy states 'If customers are unhappy with the investigation and / or response at Stage 1, the customer's complaint can be escalated to Stage 2'.</p> <p>It is not clear that residents are not required to provide a reason to escalate to Stage 2.</p> <p>This is clearer in the self-assessment that no reason is required for escalation.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its complaint policy and include that residents are not required to provide reasons for requesting their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.</p>
<p>Code Provision 6.16</p> <p>The complaint policy references this for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 (paragraphs 8.6 and 8.16).</p>	<p>As per the recommendation for 6.5, Mansfield Council should review its policy and update the postal address of the Housing Ombudsman.</p>
<p>Code Provision 6.17</p> <p>Paragraph 8.8 of the complaint policy confirms the response is provided to the resident when the answer is known, not when the outstanding actions are completed. The policy references providing the customer with an update.</p> <p>Paragraph 8.8 is situated within Stage 1 and therefore there is no reference within the Stage 2 section.</p>	<p>Recommendation: Mansfield Council should review its policy so that it is clear a response is provided to the resident when known for Stage 2 complaints as well as Stage 1.</p>