

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

OFFICER GUIDANCE

APRIL 2024





INTRODUCTION

The way we deal with complaints as an organisation has to change and your response to issues raised is very important. The Housing Ombudsman's Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code sets out requirements for member landlords that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. Landlords such as MDH must carry out an annual assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements and publish the results on their webpages.

What does this mean for Mid Devon Housing (MDH)?

Staff will be expected to be more aware of a resident expressing dissatisfaction and take steps to address any concerns that they may have either formally or informally.

On the next page you will find some simple steps you need to take should a resident express dissatisfaction e.g. that the resident may say that they are unhappy about something about the standard of service received, actions taken by us or lack of action taken by MDH.

Resident shows 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.'	Action to take	Guidance
Step 1	Ask the resident if they would like their concerns addressed informally as a Service Request or formally as a formal complaint	<p>A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such</p> <p>There may be times, when a resident expresses their dissatisfaction or uses the term "complaint" but does not wish for any further action to be taken</p>
Step 2	If a complaint is raised via a third party or representative, this must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy	<p>Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes e.g MDH and via a contractor's internal complaints process at the same time.</p> <p>If a resident raises a complaint about a contractors working on MDH's behalf, the complaint needs to be dealt with by MDH.</p>
Step 3	Log the Service Request or formal complaint on the corporate Complaints system, if you do not have access to the system, please pass this to your manager to log	<p>Details of how to log a complaint are available on MDDC's webpages at: https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/customer-services/customer-feedback-and-complaints/how-our-complaints-procedure-works/</p> <p>The system will guide you to what information is required to complete the form</p> <p>Please raise the Service Request or complaint when concerns have been brought to your attention</p>
Step 4	Pass any relevant information to MDH's Complaint Officer	The complaint will be investigated by the Complaints Officer

THE MAIN CHANGES THAT STAFF NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

The HOS defines a complaint as follows:

‘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.’

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

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. MDH must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.

However, it is important that staff asks the resident if they wish for a formal complaint to be raised. They may wish for the matter to be dealt with informally in the form of a Service Request instead.

TIMESCALES

MDH are expected to acknowledge stage 1 and 2 complaints within 5 working days from when a complaint is raised. A further 10 working days are allowed to investigate and provide a response to a complaint. Where MDH has good reason to extend a complaint, they are permitted to extend for a further 10 working days and provide a reason for this.

MDH operate a two stage process and must no longer include any additional levels e.g. reviews as part of their investigations.



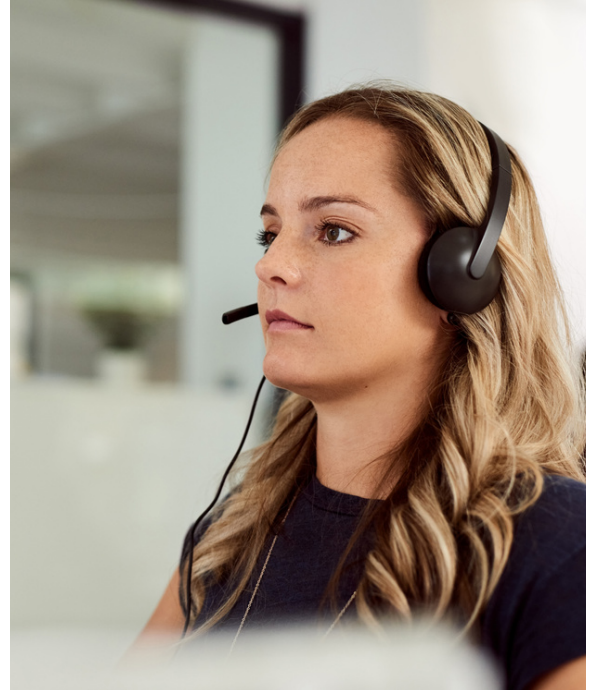
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LOGGING A COMPLAINT

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. Details of how to log a complaint are available on MDDC's webpages at:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/customer-services/customer-feedback-and-complaints/how-our-complaints-procedure-works/>

A new CRM system is being implemented and further information how to use this new system will be available in due course. In addition, the corporate Complaints and Feedback Policy is being updated in line with changes within the HOS Code and Local Government & Social Care Code.



EQUALITY ACT

MDH must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. We 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.

Therefore, should a resident disclosed any vulnerabilities or request reasonable adjustments, it is important that this information is logged on MDH's housing management system. Should a complaint be escalated to the HOS for investigation, a standard question they always ask is about information held about the resident's vulnerabilities.



THE MAIN CHANGES THAT STAFF NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

CONTRACTORS

Complaints made about contractors working on behalf of MDH, the complaint is expected to be investigated by MDH. If staff come across any resident dissatisfied with the service provided by our contractor, please ask the question, would they like their concerns to be investigated informally via a Service Request or formally via our formal complaint process. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes. MDH are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.

RECORD KEEPING

MDH are expected to keep a full record 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. Therefore, it is important that MDH raise awareness of good record keeping ensuring that documents are saved, information is recorded and any action arising from lessons learnt are followed up and actioned.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Should any member of staff require further information on Complaint Handling, please contact MDH's Complaints Officer or alternatively, please visit the HOS webpages at: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Housing
Ombudsman Service

