

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

OFFICER GUIDANCE

REVISED AUGUST 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 informally or informally.

Below are 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	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. 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
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	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. If a resident raises a complaint about a contractors working on MDH's behalf, the complaint needs to be dealt with by MDH.
Step 3	<p>Log the Service Request direct with the Complaints Officer or if a formal complaint is raised at stage 1 or escalated to stage 2, please forward onto Customer Services Team to log if the resident does not wish to log the complaint online.</p> <p>The same process is used for logging other types of feedback e.g compliments or comments.</p>	<p>Details of how a customer logs feedback is 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> <p>Logging feedback: All feedback not logged online by a customer will have to be logged by the Customer Service Team. Where possible please encourage customers and your teams to promote logging online for customers who are able to. Where this is not possible and the feedback has not come in writing or you have someone on the phone who needs to complain, we would like to take all feedback direct from the customer rather than a message. Please pass the customer to the Customer Service Team to speak to the caller or send us an email to call the customer and record the feedback with them. All feedback you receive in writing (email or letter etc.) will need to be sent to Customer Services Team to be logged on the system, please send emails or scans of letter to csmange@middevon.gov.uk and it will be logged on the system for you.</p>
Step 4	Pass any relevant information to MDH's Complaint Officer	The complaint will be investigated by the Complaints Officer. There may be occasions when another MDH officer may investigate a complaint.

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.



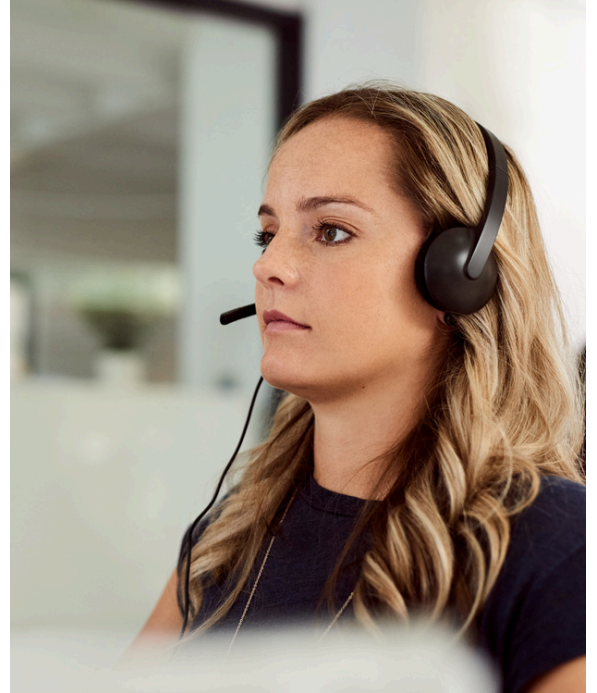
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LOGGING A COMPLAINT

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 Customer Services Team or provide the customer advice on how to log this online. 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 has been implemented and details of how to log feedback e.g compliments, comments or complaints, please see point 3 above. In addition, the corporate Complaints and Feedback Policy has been updated in line with changes within the HOS Code and Local Government & Social Care Code. A copy of this policy is available to view online at: [Customer feedback and complaints - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)



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

