

## **Member Responsible for Complaints - Role profile**

Both the Housing Ombudsman's and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Codes require local authorities to appoint a "Member Responsible for Complaints" on their governing body, to support a positive complaint handling culture.

Further information, guidance and FAQ's are available online:  
[Member Responsible for Complaints \(MRC\) | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

The LGSCO has not yet (as of July 2024) issued detailed advice on the role.

### **The Member**

A councillor (or Committee) who has oversight of complaints handling and performance.

### **Appointment**

Three-year appointment for a maximum two terms.

### **Purpose of the role**

The role is:

- To champion a positive complaint handling culture.
- To provide assurance to the governing body on the efficacy of its complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to the Council.
- To seek assurances from the complaints team and where appropriate the operational teams that complaints are being managed, change is happening and that residents are being heard through the process.
- To ensure complaint handling promotes service improvement for residents and learning and business improvement for the organisation.

### **Responsibilities – Governing Body Assurance**

1. To promote a culture of openness and transparency where complaints made by residents are seen as a form of insight into the how the organisation is managed. To provide assurance that systems are in place to capture learning from complaints and that governing bodies are engaged with this. To ensure senior level ownership of learning and accountability stemming from complaints.
2. To provide assurance to the governing body, through engagement with operational teams, that complaints are valued as an opportunity to learn, to give an early warning of ineffective processes, policies, or behaviours, to identify areas for improvement and to improve awareness and accessibility; and how this is happening across the organisation.

3. To engage with the chair of the audit and risk committee, or equivalent, to discuss any risks emerging from complaints and any recommendations for improvement in service areas which may be relevant to internal audit's activities.
4. To engage in, oversee, and ratify the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, providing assurance that an accurate self-assessment is produced and published each year. This may include engaging residents in the self-assessment exercise.
5. To alert the governing body of any concerns they have about the handling of complaints, the substantive issues giving rise to complaints, or the outcome of an individual complaint.
6. To ensure the whole governing body understands its responsibilities to deliver a positive complaint handling culture and that complaints are given the status they deserve within the senior leadership's work.

### **Responsibilities – Complaint Handling Code**

7. To review the communication of the Council through its complaints to ensure it is empathetic, effective, and appropriate.
8. To gain assurance of the organisation's timely compliance with Ombudsman evidence requirements and orders promoting an organisation wide culture that demonstrates the learning and the changes to services that are provided for residents.
9. To promote a culture where every employee supports effective complaint handling, where complaint handlers have the authority and respect within the organisation to help put things right when they go wrong. This should also extend to where the local authority uses contractors and other service providers. To have a visible presence that is organisation wide and has access to individual staff members to be able to 'test' that proactive complaint handling is embedded across all staff.
10. To gain assurance following the self-assessment, that the complaints team has the resources available to fulfil its obligations.
11. To receive regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance and take an inquisitorial approach when reviewing this information. The aim is to ensure that information presented to the governing body, provides sufficient assurance of a well-managed and customer focused complaints handling culture.

### **Responsibilities – Learning**

12. To require that intelligence provided by the Ombudsman is used to develop and improve services, gaining assurance that recommendations are actioned and, where necessary, reviewing policies, procedures and approaches to service delivery following Ombudsman reports.
13. To encourage a culture of effective cross-organisational and cross-department learning where operational teams collaborate with each other to produce improved service delivery.
14. To encourage a culture where senior management regularly review issues and trends arising from complaint handling with themes or trends being assessed and reported to the governing body, which identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. To gain assurance that where revision or change is required, this is followed through and communicated to the governing body and that residents are central to any change.