

Webchat questions and answers

Almshouses Webinar 27 November 2025

Q: Is there any way for the process to be set so that: if there are NO COMPLAINTS at all in any reporting period (but the charity can demonstrate they have policy and processes in place), that is the end of the submission? This may be the case for so many small almshouse charities and would help reduce admin burden.

A: Under the Code, provision 8.1 sets out what is expected in a landlord's annual report. Where a landlord records 'no complaints' this is as significant to residents as one that reports complaints. The report is named the annual complaint handling and service improvement report and therefore should help support the landlord to reflect on its good practises and gives the landlord an opportunity to communicate any service improvements it has made. Publishing the report alongside the other submissions documents provides full transparency for residents.

We have been actively listening to our very small landlords and trade bodies when being told about the concerns raised and the impact of creating the annual report and completing the documentation. This feedback helped shape the toolkit and the content of the Almshouses webinar. We will continue to support you in your roles whilst ensuring all residents are treated the same when it comes to complaint handling regardless of the size of the landlord.

Within the toolkit there is an example of an annual report and governing body response where there have been no complaints, this has been included to support landlords to complete their annual submission.

Q. At DAMHA as well as submitting for ourselves, we also submit for 5 smaller Almshouse charities which we manage, the majority of which have zero complaints raised. In the past it has been acceptable to upload our Self-Assessment and Policy alongside a Annual Reports specific to each charity. This year depending on who has validated the submissions, we have received various requests for further evidence. One request stated we needed separate policies for each charity, another request asked for us to name each managed charity in our own Damha Policy & Self-Assessment. We are not sure which is the best way to move forward to ensure compliance for our managed charities

A. We will respond directly to you regarding your question. Information for managing agents and landlords will be included in the year 2 toolkit and within our frequently asked questions about the Code on our website

Q: I'm MRC and Clerk not a trustee? I'm the Complaints officer and a trustee is the appeals officer.

Q: Does the MRC have to be a board member or can it be a member of staff?

A: Under the Code the MRC must be a member of the governing body or equivalent (see Code provision 9.5) and therefore in the case of a charity, it should be a trustee.

The MRC is different from the person who is accountable for complaint handling under Code provision 9.4, who does not need to be a member of the Board of trustees

Q: If no complaints but have offered residents opportunity to complain after report of second service failure, should this be included in annual report?

A: Landlords are only required to report in their annual report the complaints they have received and the complaints they have refused to accept. The landlord does not need to report in its annual report occasions where, having been given the choice as to whether or not they wish to pursue a complaint, residents have chosen not to do so. Though landlords should ensure they fully understand the reason a resident may not wish to raise a complaint. If the landlord has no complaints to report then it may wish to note in its annual report that it wants to promote a positive complaint handling culture and that residents are offered the choice of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction with a service.

Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly by landlords but do not need to be reported in the annual report.

Q: Does the submission have to be online or can it be paper-based?

A: Landlords are required to [provide the annual submission via our dedicated electronic form](#). Alternative formats, such as word documents, excel spreadsheets or PDFs will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement.

Q: I did not receive a reminder letter I believe. Was it definitely sent? How can I check which address you are sending it to?

A: Please contact Compliance@housing-ombudsman.org.uk and let us have the name of your Charity and we can check this for you.

Q: Would it be a good idea to send our complaints policy via email to our residents?

A: If the landlord does not have a website, then it will need to decide how it can publicise its complaints policy effectively to its residents, and email may be one option it considers. Other options may include providing paper copies on communal noticeboards and publication in newsletters.

Q: Can you ensure that the toolkit given to the Almshouse Association clearly states which years it refers too. I replicated year 2 submissions based on year 1 submissions, only to find that one of these had been updated. It wasn't obviously and created quite a lot of extra work and stress!

A: When the year 2 toolkit is provided to the Almshouse Association, we will ask that the year 1 toolkit is removed from the website to prevent any confusion.

Q: Can you confirm the figures out of 16,000 Almshouse only 500 are members of your organisation

A: The correct figures are that over 500 of 1600 Almshouses are our members of the Scheme

Q: If we have resident that complains but item is working fine can we close complaint?

A: No, if the landlord has already accepted the resident's complaint-the landlord-must issue a stage 1 response as per provision 6.9 of the Code giving clear reasons for its decision not to uphold the complaint and details of how the resident can escalate the complaint to stage 2 if they are not satisfied with the stage 1 response.

If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, then as per provision 2.4 of the Code, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint

Q: Ref HOS membership. I believe almshouse members have to join the HOS if they become RPs. And even if they stop being an RPs, they STILL have to remain a member of the HOS. That is our position.

A: If the landlord deregisters as a registered provider and had ever received public funds/social housing grants for refurbishment/upgrade work, they are not required to remain as members, irrespective of whether the grant has or has not been repaid.

If the landlord deregisters as a registered provider and has ever received public funds/social housing grants to build properties, they can leave if it is repaid. If the grant has not been repaid in full, they remain as a member.

We would always ask landlords to contact us at membership@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or compliance@housing-ombudsman.org.uk to discuss further.