

Appendix B – Self-Assessment Form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord’s governing body annually.

Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory ‘must’ requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i>	Yes	Included in our Complaints Policy dated September 2022. The term tenant is used, rather than resident, due to our customer base.
1.3	The resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	Wording included in our Complaints Policy dated September 2022.
1.6	... if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	Yes	<i>Could strengthen the wording around service requests in the existing policy and when to log these as a complaint.</i>
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Included in Complaints Policy dated September 2022
1.8	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered,	Yes	Included in Complaints Policy dated September 2022

	and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents.		<i>Could change timescale for excluding a complaint from 3 to 6 months, in line with the example in the HOS complaints handling code.</i>
1.9	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed 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.	Yes	Included in our Complaints Policy dated September 2022

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request , where a resident may be unhappy with a situation that they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about the service they have/have not received.	Yes	Included in our published Complaints Policy.
1.5	Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.	<i>Partial</i>	<i>We actively follow up on issues that we are made aware of.</i>

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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2.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints system.	Yes	Our Complaints Policy states: "Complaints will be accepted in person, in writing, by telephone, email or online."
2.3	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding.	Yes	The Policy is available on request and from our website.
2.4	Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website.	Yes	The Complaints Policy and Procedure can be found in two clicks from the Home page.
2.5	Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training to deal with such requests.	Yes	Within the published policy.
2.6	Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Posters about the Housing Ombudsman scheme are displayed in the reception area of our office and interview room. There is a link to the residents' section of the Ombudsman's website from ours. Articles are included periodically in our tenants' newsletter.
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Articles are included periodically in our newsletters, the last time in Winter 2022.

2.8	Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord's complaints process is exhausted.	Yes	A copy of the Policy (or details of where to find it on our website) is provided at stage 1.
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Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.	N/A	We do not operate social media channels.

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer".	Yes	The Policy states that this will normally be the Head of Operations at stage 1, the Chief Executive at stage 2 and up to two members of the board at Stage 3.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	Attendance at relevant HOS webinars and HOS training.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	<p>Complaint handlers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to act sensitively and fairly • be trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents • have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 	Yes	

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	<p>Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'pre-complaint stage') as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt.</p>	Yes	<p>There are 3 stages to our Complaints Policy and these are clearly set out.</p> <p>This timescale of 5 days is included in our Complaints Policy and adherence to it is monitored via a spreadsheet.</p> <p>In 2022/23, 100% of stage 1 complaints were logged and acknowledged within five days of receipt.</p>

4.2	Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	Yes	As outlined in our Policy and evidenced by our correspondence. We ask the complainant for clarification if the nature of the complaint is unclear.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	
4.7	<p>The complaint handler must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits • act independently and have an open mind • take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest • consider all information and evidence carefully • keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter. 	Yes	We make every effort to be as open and transparent as possible, mindful that within a small team this can be difficult.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	
4.12	<p>The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	We always seek to ensure that we fully investigate and understand a complaint.
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	Included in our Complaints Policy dated September 2022.

4.14	A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a landlord's complaints policy and must be the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint.	Yes	Reasons for non-escalation are included in the exclusions section of the Complaints Policy.
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review 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 reports or surveys prepared.	Yes	Complaints Spreadsheet, SharePoint folders, tenancy file and notes held on Pyramid.
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Yes	As a small association, this is contained within the Complaints Policy and Procedure rather than in a separate document.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.3	Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic	Yes	We take care to be clear about what is possible, realistic and achievable in our interactions with residents.
4.4	A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident and whether there are any urgent actions required.	Yes	We try to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity.
4.5	Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.	Yes	This is included in our published Policy.

4.8	Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties.	Yes	We would look to be clear about what the legal obligations are on both sides if this was relevant to a complaint.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Partial	As a very small organisation it is often difficult to avoid identifying staff and contractors, but we would seek to respond on behalf of the organisation.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	If additional time is required to investigate a complaint the tenant is kept informed.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	No	We do not currently have a built-in process of seeking feedback. The small size of LSHA makes this challenging as the same staff asking for feedback would have responded to the complaint. We will explore other options.
4.17	Landlords should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and engaged in the complaints process, including the learning that can be gained	Yes	We constantly seek to understand if complaints are as the result of an inherent service failure or as the result of staff not complying with expected standards.
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Each complaint is considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the published policy.

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	Yes	We always aim to respond within 10 working days. However, as a very small organisation circumstances such as sick leave or annual leave can make this problematic.
5.5	A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	Yes	We always seek to respond as soon as possible to the complaint, setting out any outstanding actions. These are tracked until complete.
5.6	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	We seek to give a clear, easily understandable response.
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 	Yes	Our complaints policy sets this out. Response letters include this information.

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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5.9	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord's procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.	Yes	As described in the published complaints policy and procedure
5.10	On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	Yes	We seek to ensure that we have a clear understanding of the specific nature of the complaint and what remedy the resident is seeking.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Yes	As set out in our published complaints policy and procedure
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	As set out in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	Yes	As described in the published complaints policy. In 2022/23, 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days and 1 within 30 days.
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions and	Yes	As evidenced by our Complaints Policy and Procedure, and response letters.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 		
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Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.17	Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.	Yes	<p>LSHA has a 3-stage process. The board has previously agreed to this approach for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) with a small team, tenants may feel that their complaint is not being treated fairly or objectively. (2) if a two-stage process included a board member, the board would be required to sit on a considerably higher proportion of cases. <p>The board considered that a two-stage process with a board member would be the fairest but would involve considerably more administration and did not suggest good value for money.</p> <p>This will be kept under review.</p>
5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint 	Yes	As set out in Our Complaints Policy and Procedure.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 		
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Best practice 'should' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.2	If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	One Stage 1 complaint was responded to outside the 20-day timescale in 2022/23 due to needing to arrange an inspection via a consultant and awaiting the report. The tenant was satisfied with this approach.
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	Yes	We now provide the Ombudsman's contact details at every stage of the complaint.
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.	Yes	We would consider past history when considering the resolution to a complaint.
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Noted

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.14	If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	As evidenced by our response letters.
5.15	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response	Yes	We provide the Ombudsman's contact details at every stage of the complaint.

Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.18	Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.	Yes	Complaints only go to a third stage when requested by the tenant. Panel hearings (if necessary) are convened within six weeks. Where we have exceeded the timescales set out, this has been with the complainant's agreement.
5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.		We provide the Ombudsman's contact details at every stage of the complaint.

Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.1	Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.	Yes	As evidenced by our response letters, we accept when we make mistakes and
6.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents.	Yes	We work in line with our Compensation policy and procedure
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Agreed, as noted by our response letters.
6.6	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.	Yes	We always seek to ensure that we comply with any statutory payments in addition to any offers of compensation or apology payments in line with our Compensation policy and procedure.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	Yes	Where a systemic service delivery issue has been highlighted as part of a complaint, we would seek to rectify it. As a small organisation, this is easily achievable.

6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.	Yes	We would not look to absolve ourselves of any responsibility, where a tenant has recourse to another avenue of redress.
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Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny panels.		Because of our size and small number of complaints, an annual report to residents would seem appropriate. However, leaning can be

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	Yes	Howard Webber appointed by Board 21 September 2022.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe 	Yes	As evidenced by the board papers, members receive quarterly performance information on the volume and nature of complaints. The annual self-assessment is reviewed by board, again as evidenced by the board papers.

	maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge.		Updates are provided to board on complaints reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman. There was one such complaint in 2022/23. From Autumn 2023, members will receive an annual review of complaints, covering volume, categories and outcomes.
7.5	Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.	Yes	Complaints are discussed at by the Management Team and wider staff body as appropriate at their meetings.
7.6	Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments • take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others • act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 	No	Objectives will be introduced as part of a performance management framework in 2023/24.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
8.1	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	Yes	Completed September 2022, and again in September 2023.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Noted. There have been no changes in our structure or our procedure.

<p>8.3</p>	<p>Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Last reported to board in September 2022 and published on our website once approved.</p> <p>This assessment is due to be reported to board in October 2023 and will be published by November 2023.</p> <p>Reference included to the self-assessment in our 'lessons learned from complaints 2021/22' section of our Annual Report.</p>
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