

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>	Y	This definition is used in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure & Guidance Document
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure & Guidance Document

1.8	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents.	Y	Clarified ASB is via a different Policy. As noted in 1.8 of the Policy
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure

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.	Y	This is noted in the Policy (1.9) and in our Complaints Guidance document- This will also be included in Colleague Complaint training
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.	Y	All survey feedback is provided in the form of 'You Said' 'We Did' Reports and includes details of how people can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (1.10)
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure with Clear headings to detail the process-Alternative formats are also available as detailed (section 3)
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.	Y	Included on our website
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure re Accessible formats and reasonable adjustments- reasonable adjustments is also detailed in our Maintenance and Repairs 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.	N	The Code and the Policy are published on our website The Policy is promoted and provided to People via the Handbook, however The Code is not mentioned in the Handbook. The

			<p>Handbook is under review and this will be included in the revised booklet</p> <p>Posters are displayed in accommodation units to promote Comments, Compliments and Complaints however current posters do not refer to the Code. Posters will be revised to include reference to this</p> <p>We will also start to publish the Code in Here at Horton, starting with the next edition</p>
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Y	We have not done this previously however as noted above and also as part of the recent Policy review and Colleague Guidance-standard complaints letter templates have been revised to include Ombudsman details at complaint review outcome stage for Accommodation Based services complaints. This will also be published in the Spring edition of Here at Horton
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure and in the templates as noted above

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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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".	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure and in the templates as noted above
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure. Complaints Training is mandatory and where a conflict may be identified the complaint is passed to an alternative Complaints Officer.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	Complaint handlers should: <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 	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 		
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Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	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 .	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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.	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure, Procedure Guidance and Standard Letter templates
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.		

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. 	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure Guidance and colleague training
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Y	Confirmed in section 3
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. 	Y	Confirmed in Procedure Guidance and training
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Y	Timescales are confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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.	Y	This is confirmed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure
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.	Y	This is managed by the Complaints Lead and records include all information as described in the Code

4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Y	ASB Policy, Warnings Procedure
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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	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (6.1)
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (5.1)
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.2)
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.	Y	Section 1.8 of the Policy Refers to acknowledgement of Legal obligations
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Colleague Guidance
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Y	This is detailed throughout the Policy document by providing timescales and confirming feedback
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure Section 9 and feedback requested in complaint outcome letters (standard letter templates are separate appendices to the Policy)

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	Y	Colleague training is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure. Recognising and Responding to complaints is mandatory training for all colleagues
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Sections 2.5 and 8.2 -Also included in Housing Management Training

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure-set as 4 working days
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.	Y	This is confirmed in timelines built into the Policy. Also in Policy Guidance document and standard outcome letters templates
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.	Y	Outcome letters and standard templates. Policy Guidance
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 	Y	Policy Guidance and standard Outcome letters and templates confirm that this process is followed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
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Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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.	Y	Included in the policy (7.6) & (8.1)
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.	N	Standard Letter template now updated to ensure clarity
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Y	Yes this is our normal Procedure- track record of complaints records can clarify this
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Y	Yes this is our normal Procedure- track record of complaints records can clarify this. Also clarified in the Policy (7.2))
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure as 14 days (7.6)
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:	Y	Outcome letters and templates updated to include all details as specified-also clarified in the Policy (7.6) (8)

	<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 <p>and</p> <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.	NA	2 Stages Only in our Policy & Procedure
5.20	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three 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 details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 	NA	2 Stages Only in our Policy & Procedure

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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.6)
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.5) (7.6)
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.5) and also in the policy guidance document
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.5)

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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.5)
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	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure

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.	N/A	2 stage process only
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.	N/A	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure for stages 1 & 2 –we have not applied a stage 3

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.	Y	Outcome letters and standard letter templates. This will also be defined in the Guidance for Colleagues
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.	Y	This is detailed in the colleague guidance. This will also need to be emphasised/included in the revised colleague training following Policy approval

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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure & Training and also set out as prompts in Standard Letter templates
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.	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (7.4)

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.	Y	Annual Evaluation identifies trends. Annual Satisfaction Survey has also identified trends and we have evidence to demonstrate that these are acted upon
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.	Y	Compensation/redress is noted in the policy (7.4) We also have reference to redress considered in the Maintenance & Repairs Policy – for issues/complaints. Will include something in the staff guidance

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.	Y	Here at Horton publishes our complaints Annual review of Complaints. The Annual review is also presented to the Boards. The review identifies any trends and is followed up with an Action Plan should any improvements be identified

			We also consult on the Policy and Procedure and provide YS/WD responses to this
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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.	Y	SA- Services Director is Complaints Lead. See responsibilities as detailed in the Policy section (4) SA is named as the lead person on the Complaints record and cc'd on all letters relating to complaints
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 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. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Evaluation covers volume, categories and outcome of complaints. Complaint handling feedback is requested for every individual complaint however response is rare. This is reported quarterly when and if feedback is received (9.5) The annual review considers trends and an action plan is identified to address any improvements identified We have not had any complaints referred to the Ombudsman however this will be reported to the Boards should this arise (noted 9.5 and will include in the Annual Evaluation of Complaints) We report quarterly on the number of complaints and how many were

			<p>responded to within timescale-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We report quarterly to confirm whether response timescales have been met <p>Annual Self- Assessment was completed in 2021-missed in 2022 and recently completed in 2023. This will be completed Annually going forward-next due in February 2024</p>
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.	Y	Themes & trends are considered as part of the Evaluation and actions put in place accordingly
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. 	Y	This is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure (4)

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.	Y	Last completed 2021. This version is new - in place April 22. Missed this in 22 due to delay in completing the Policy review. Completed Feb 2023
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Y	It is detailed in our Complaints Policy and Procedure that we would do this should it

			apply (9.8) however this to date has not been applicable
8.3	<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 	Y	As above