`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:  ‘*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*. | Yes | As set out in the Complaints Policy |
| **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 | Staff are trained to recognise a complaint when presented to them. The policy states that complaints are received and actioned from third parties and followed according to the policy. |
| **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 | This is set out in the Policy |
| **1.7** | A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. | Yes | Exclusions are listed in the Policy |
| **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. | Yes | Exclusions are listed in 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. | Yes | Stated in the Complaints Policy |

## 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 | Explained in the 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. | Yes | Any issues arising out of satisfaction surveys are followed up and support is provided to help the tenant resolve their issue either through the Complaints Policy or a more appropriate procedure. |

# 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. | Yes | Complaints are received from email, phone calls, in person, and in writing. |
| **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 | This is set out in the Tenancy Agreement and posters are displayed giving details of the procedure. |
| **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. | No | The revised Complaints Policy is currently in the process of being added to the 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. | Yes | Referenced in the 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 | The Complaints procedure is on display on the notice board in both houses. |
| **2.7** | Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents. |  | Information on how to access the Housing Ombudsman is included in all complaints letters. |
| **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. |  | Information on how to access the Housing Ombudsman is included in all complaints letters. |

## Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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. |  | We do not have any 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 Registered Manager is responsible for complaint handling and ensuring the complaints are responded to and reported to the Board. |
| **3.2** | …the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest. | Yes | The Complaint Handler has extensive experience in managing complaints, and any potential conflicts would be highlighted and reviewed on a case by case basis. |

## Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **3.3** | Complaint handlers should:   * 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. |  | Training for complaint handlers is being sourced. |

# 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**. | Yes | The stages of the process are set out in the Policy, and detailed records are kept of each complaint, and are acknowledged within five days. |
| **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 | This is set out in the complaints acknowledgement letter in Stages 1 and 2. |
| **4.6** | A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner. | Yes | WEFHS is a small organisation and any risk of impartiality would be highlighted and the complaint allocated to another staff or Board member. Where it is deemed necessary the Board will commission an independent investigation, which happened in 2023 in response to a complaint against a senior member of staff. |
| **4.7** | The complaint handler must:   * 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 | As set out in the Policy |
| **4.11** | Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication | Yes | Each complaint received will involve a discussion on how best to meet the tenant’s needs |
| **4.12** | The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:   * set out their position * comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. | Yes | This will be part of the investigation process. |
| **4.13** | A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint | Yes | As set out in the Policy |
| **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 | As set out in the 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 | All records are held in files in the Manager’s office for security. |
| **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 | Noted in the Policy. |

## Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 | The process requires a conversation with the tenant to fully understand their expectations. |
| **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 | Evidence will be in the complaint responses and in the standing board item of complaints reports received. |
| **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 | If requested, complainants can be represented or supported by others. |
| **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 | This would be discussed in the initial complaint procedure and/or in the acknowledgement letters and any subsequent correspondence. |
| **4.9** | Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors. | Yes | Confidentiality is fundamental to the policy. |
| **4.10** | Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation. | Yes | The close proximity of our tenants to the office helps with regular communication and opportunities for updates and clarification. |
| **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. | Yes | A satisfaction questionnaire will be sent out at the closure of all complaints from April 2024 onwards |
| **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 | All lessons learned are reported to the Board to feed into service improvement plans. |
| **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 | All decisions to restrict contact will be discussed with staff and Board to fully understand the needs of the individual and will have regard to the provisions within the Equality Act. |

# 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 **within 10 working days** 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 | Our policy clearly states the requirement to respond within 10 working days. Should an extension be required this will be done under exceptional circumstances only and with the agreement of the tenant. |
| **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 | Complaint responses are sent to residents within the complaint investigation period. |
| **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 | This is set out in the Policy |
| **5.8** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language:   * 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 | This expectation is set out in the Policy. |

## 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. | Yes | This is set out in the Policy |
| **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 | This will be set out in the complaint letters and is included in the Policy. |
| **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 | This is set out in the Policy |
| **5.12** | The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one. | Yes | Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by an allocated board member or an independent person commissioned by the board as necessary. |
| **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 | Our policy clearly states the requirement to respond within 20 working days. Should an extension be required this will be done under exceptional circumstances only and with the agreement of the tenant. |
| **5.16** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:   * 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**   * 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. | Yes | As set out in the Policy. There is no Stage Three. |

## 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 | There is no Stage Three |
| **5.20** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:   * 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 |  | There is no Stage Three |

## 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 | The policy states that the extension will be agreed with the tenant. |
| **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 | The Housing Ombudsman contact details are provided on all complaint correspondence. |
| **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 | The review of past issues and procedures would form a key part of the investigation. |
| **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 | This will be kept under review during the complaint process to ensure that the initial complaint is being investigated thoroughly and managed in the best way possible. The tenant will be kept up to date with how the new complaints are going to be managed. |

## 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 | The procedures outline the requirement for extensions to be agreed with the tenant. |
| **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 | The Housing Ombudsman contact details are provided on all complaint correspondence. |

## 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 **within 20 working days** 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 |  |
| **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 |  |

# Section 6 - Putting things right

## Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 | Where complaint investigations result in the issues raised being upheld, these are fully acknowledged as part of the complaint resolution letter with clear actions outlined to remedy them. |
| **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 | Any remedy offered is based on the extent of service failure. |
| **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 | The complaint letter will clearly outline to action to be taken and the timelines for resolution. |
| **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 | The compensation amount that may be offered will be considered suitable and proportionate. |

## Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 | We monitor themes as part of the lessons learnt to understand if failings are systematic rather than one off issues. |
| **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 | This would be done as required. |

# 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. | Partially. | This is reported to the Board and considered for service improvement and shared with staff. Lessons learned from the few complaints we receive will be reported to tenants from April 2024. The objective, as set out in the policy, is to identify “opportunities for the organisation to review practice and consider changes to the procedures”. |

**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 | Agreed by the Board Feb 25. |
| **7.4** | As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:   * 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. | Partially | Complaints are discussed at Board meetings, with lessons learned and agreed improvement plans. Going forward the Board will review the self assessment of compliance and consider complaint handling performance overall. Whilst there are very few complaints received, the Board review them to make sure that trends, service failures and emerging issues are explored and considered. |
| **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 | This is reviewed by the managers and reported to the Board and considered for service improvement and shared with staff. |
| **7.6** | Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:   * 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 | As a very small organisation we all work very closely to deliver services, and also to fix things when they go wrong. The Board will need to review this in order to introduce an objective which is appropriate for the size and nature of the organisation. |

# Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

## Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 |  |
| **8.2** | Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures. | Yes | This compliance review has been undertaken following a review of the policy, following the Ombudsman’s complaints handling expectations. |
| **8.3** | Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:   * 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 | Yes | The self assessment has been sent electronically to all Board members and will be fully reviewed in the May Board meeting. This and the revised policy will also be published on the website and in the annual report. |